

Getting to Implementation

The Status of Local Climate Action in California

 INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTSM

Berkeley Law | Center for Law, Energy, & the Environment

November 2023



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Acknowledgements:

The authors would like to thank each of the survey respondents who took the time to provide answers to the survey and the respondents who agreed to share their experience and knowledge in follow-up interviews. We would also like to thank the many experts who met with us to provide input on survey design, as well as the fellows at CLEE who provided input on survey design and outreach, especially Ted Lamm, Katie Segal, Ross Zelen, Jenn Perron, Chandra Middleton, Gil Damon, and Leanna Weissberg. We also thank the League of California Cities, California State Association of Counties, and California Special District Association for their assistance in distributing the survey. Finally, we want to thank Next10 for their support and partnership on this project.

NEXT 10 is an independent nonpartisan organization that educates, engages and empowers Californians to improve the state's future.

Next 10 is focused on innovation and the intersection between the economy, the environment, and quality of life issues for all Californians. We provide critical data to help inform the state's efforts to grow the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Next 10 was founded in 2003 by businessman and philanthropist F. Noel Perry.



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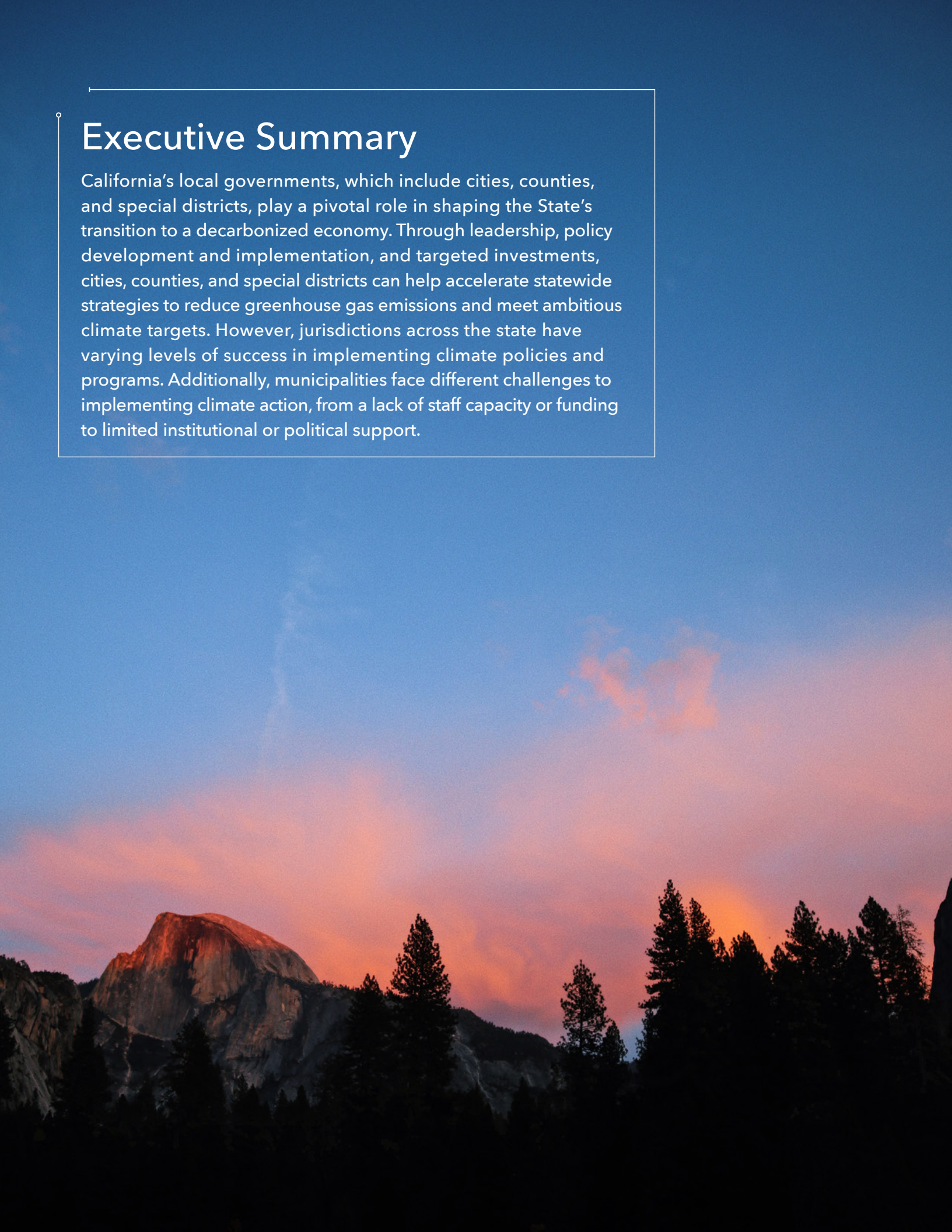


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Executive Summary

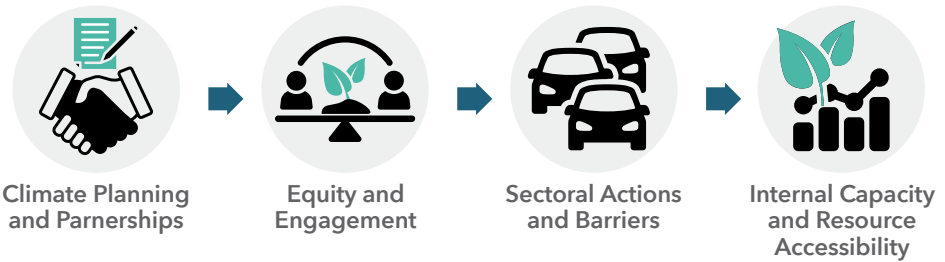
California's local governments, which include cities, counties, and special districts, play a pivotal role in shaping the State's transition to a decarbonized economy. Through leadership, policy development and implementation, and targeted investments, cities, counties, and special districts can help accelerate statewide strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet ambitious climate targets. However, jurisdictions across the state have varying levels of success in implementing climate policies and programs. Additionally, municipalities face different challenges to implementing climate action, from a lack of staff capacity or funding to limited institutional or political support.



California is at a critical point in its efforts to decarbonize the economy and achieve its climate targets. Recent state and federal funding commitments for climate actions offer an opportunity for California’s local governments to prioritize implementing climate strategies across multiple sectors. These commitments compliment California’s historic climate agenda, which includes the signing of AB 1279, setting the State’s carbon neutrality target into law, and the publication of the California Air Resource Board’s 2022 Scoping Plan, outlining a pathway to carbon neutrality by 2045.¹

Funding and State support for local climate action are key in enabling municipalities to design and implement climate solutions. However, to further support municipalities’ implementation efforts, it is necessary to first understand the current state of local action on climate, including the barriers to and resources needed for implementation. To develop an initial understanding of these activities, the Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment (CLEE) at Berkeley Law and the Institute for Local Government developed and distributed a survey to California cities, counties, and special districts. The California Local Government Climate Activity Survey gathered information on existing efforts to address climate change, opportunities for strategic climate policy and planning, and barriers to the timely implementation of climate solutions. The Survey was designed to help assess the current status of climate action planning efforts and policy implementation, identify opportunities and barriers to move from planning to implementation, and increase understanding of resource constraints, barriers, and opportunities to advance action across a range of policy areas.

Survey questions were grouped into four topics to address some of the key actions local governments can take to reduce GHG emissions and prepare their communities for the impacts of climate change.



Over one-third of California’s cities and counties responded to the survey. These jurisdictions were more likely to be large, located in coastal counties, and come from more urban regions of the state, resulting in a sample that underrepresents rural, small, and less wealthy municipalities. However, findings suggest that respondents across all sizes and income groups, with some variation, are engaged with climate topics relevant to their jurisdictions and actively looking for ways to implement both climate mitigation and adaptation strategies. Responding jurisdictions are most active on climate policies related to Transportation, Land Use, and Energy & Buildings but express a growing

¹ “2022 Scoping Plan for Achieving Carbon Neutrality” (California Air Resources Board, December 2022), <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/ab-32-climate-change-scopingplan/2022-scoping-plan-documents>.

TABLE ES.1 Average percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving actions in each policy area from the planning stage to the implementation stage

Policy Area	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Transportation	69%	50%	26%	33%	24%	17%	34%
Energy & Buildings	51%	72%	46%	50%	19%	24%	32%
Land Use	70%	71%	25%	35%	17%	25%	33%
Water & Groundwater	73%	72%	34%	46%	13%	22%	39%
Waste	70%	72%	32%	46%	32%	17%	21%
Climate Risk	67%	74%	62%	60%	43%	25%	31%
Climate Equity and EJ	73%	71%	52%	55%	27%	43%	41%

interest in developing policies that support Climate Equity & Environmental Justice (EJ) priorities and policies that integrate climate risk across other planning efforts.

A key goal of the survey was to better understand the resources that can support jurisdictions’ implementation of climate actions across a range of policy areas. Across all seven policy areas covered by the survey, responding jurisdictions were most likely to identify staff capacity and funding as resource needs for moving actions from the planning stage to the implementation stage. Respondents were least likely to identify inter-governmental partnerships and community or stakeholder partnerships as resource needs, with a few action-specific exceptions.

Survey responses can be distilled into nine key takeaways about the status of local government climate action, the barriers to action implementation, and the opportunities for supporting emerging climate priorities.

- 1. Climate Action Plans Are Important, but Not Necessary, for Action:** Regardless of Climate Action Plan (CAP) status, climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are common across a wide variety of planning documents. However, most CAPs and related planning documents lack funding strategies, which is a challenge since these plans that are expensive to implement.
- 2. Organization and Integration of Climate Activities Remain a Challenge:** A frequent challenge for municipalities is the design and placement of staff position(s) focused on climate. While a standalone division can raise the importance of climate change as an issue for a local government, it can also reinforce the siloing of climate work and limit staff’s ability to make climate action a priority for other departments.
- 3. Co-Benefits are Important, Especially in Smaller and More Conservative Jurisdictions:** Respondents without CAPs were more likely to be smaller, conservative-leaning, and have a median household income below the state average. These respondents were more likely to implement policies that support climate goals while achieving other co-benefits for residents, frequently framing these strategies as in support of community health.

- 4. State Action and Investment Drive Local Action:** A local focus on transportation, energy, and equity aligns with state and federal priorities and funding commitments. At an individual action level, the percentage of jurisdictions having implemented each action is variable but generally indicates that state action—through funding or statutory requirements—is a strong motivator for local policy implementation.
- 5. Increased Support is Needed for Equity and Resilience Actions:** Climate Equity and Climate Risk both had slightly lower levels of implementation than other sectors, but both had a fairly high share of actions in the planning stage. Targeted support could assist municipalities in taking the next step beyond identifying priority communities to design equitable climate programs that address ongoing risk.
- 6. Methane is an Opportunity for Increased Local Impact:** Over half of responding jurisdictions with emission inventories have included methane in their inventory. However, respondents are not very active in the Waste sector, where the majority of local methane emissions originate from, as opposed to other sectors covered in the survey.
- 7. Tailored Funding and Capacity Needed to Overcome Barriers to Action:** While the increase in federal and state funding aligns with local needs, these resources continue to be challenging for jurisdictions to access and fall short when not paired with long-term solutions for continued funding and increased staff capacity. However, resource needs are inconsistent across jurisdictions, especially for those in the highest-income category.
- 8. Service Programs are Helpful for Adding Capacity:** Follow-up interviews revealed that the support of public service programs that place fellows in local government (e.g., Civic Spark or other AmeriCorps programs) can be pivotal in a jurisdiction's ability to be proactive on climate issues.
- 9. Collaboratives Can be Helpful but Need to be Designed to Benefit All Partners:** Responding jurisdictions do not uniformly view intergovernmental partnerships as a priority for improving climate outcomes. However, a number of Inflation Reduction Act provisions seek to support regional-scale improvements specifically, so coordination with neighboring jurisdictions will be necessary for municipalities interested in accessing those resources.

These key takeaways provide a narrative snapshot of local climate action amongst respondents to the California Local Government Climate Activity Survey. Developing a complete picture of climate action at the local level will require continued engagement with responding jurisdictions and targeted outreach to the jurisdictions that did not provide responses. Doing so will provide state and local stakeholders with critical insights on how best to assist local governments in designing climate solutions that address community needs and support the most vulnerable and impacted communities.

Introduction



California is at a critical point in its efforts to decarbonize the economy and achieve its climate targets. In 2022, Governor Newsom signed AB 1279, setting the State's carbon neutrality target into law. Meeting this goal will require a concerted focus on the implementation of climate actions. Implementation requires action at and coordination across all levels of government. The 2022 Scoping Plan, prepared by the California Air Resources Board (CARB), outlines the pathway to achieving carbon neutrality by 2045. Meeting this science-based target will require acceleration of the State's emission reduction efforts and the development of strategies to remove carbon from the atmosphere. Achieving this ambitious vision requires state, regional, and local actions to reduce GHG emissions and plan for a just transition from fossil fuels.

Local governments' impacts on climate actions stem from several factors, including:

- **Leadership:** Since the 1990s, local governments have driven some of the most progressive climate action in California. Most of the State's largest cities have committed to aggressive climate targets and are taking steps to innovate and reduce emissions.² In many cases, these policies have been the forerunner to more aggressive state climate laws and policies.
- **Policy:** Cities and counties control many of the levers for climate action. This includes areas where cities and counties have direct authority (e.g., land use and development patterns or building codes that exceed state requirements); areas where they have discretion to enact policies that exceed state policies (e.g., building codes); and areas where they can adopt enabling policies to facilitate the implementation of state policies (e.g., streamlined permitting for electric vehicle or renewable energy infrastructure).
- **Investment:** With the recent influx of state and federal funding, local governments have the potential to make significant investments in projects that support emission reductions. Investments in mobility, buildings, and enabling infrastructure frequently occur at the local level and can have a significant impact on the successful implementation of clean technologies, development patterns, and other factors that will result in emission reductions.³

Local governments are not only central to the State's emission reduction efforts, but they are also critical for adapting and building resilience in the face of changing climate conditions. Local communities are vulnerable to a wide variety of climate impacts, from extreme heat and drought to sea level rise and flooding. Local governments are often best positioned to assess relevant climate risks and hazards, collaborate with regional partners to ensure planning strategies are aligned and holistic, and engage local stakeholders on priority identification. Because of this, local governments are also key in decisions that shape local and regional resilience outcomes.

2 Markolf, S., Azevedo, I. M., Muro, M., & Victor, D. G. (2020, October 1). Pledges and progress: Steps toward greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the 100 largest cities across the United States. Retrieved June 1, 2023, from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/pledges-and-progress-steps-toward-greenhouse-gas-emissions-reductions-in-the-100-largest-cities-across-the-united-states/>

3 Jillian, B. (2021, June 1). Local Governments Can Use Their Power to Combat Climate Change. Bloomberg Law. Retrieved June 1, 2023, from <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/local-governments-can-use-their-power-to-combat-climate-change-17>

Finally, local governments have an important role to play in meeting climate equity goals. Local governments interact directly with residents, businesses, and stakeholders. Through this work, cities and counties have the knowledge and experience to design climate solutions that address community needs and support the most vulnerable and impacted communities.

Understanding the Status of Local Climate Action

Because of the key roles local governments play in helping to meet California's climate goals, it is important to understand the current status of local climate activities. This includes the status of planning, policy implementation, barriers to action, resources needed to support implementation, and equity and engagement activities.

To develop an initial understanding of these activities, the Center for Law, Energy, and the Environment (CLEE) at Berkeley Law and the Institute for Local Government developed and distributed a survey to California's local governments. The California Local Government Climate Activity Survey gathered information on municipalities' existing efforts to address climate change, opportunities for strategic climate policy and planning, and barriers to the timely implementation of climate solutions.

We designed the survey to help:

- Assess the status of climate action planning efforts and policy implementation;
- Identify opportunities and barriers to move from planning to implementation; and
- Increase our understanding of resource constraints, barriers, and opportunities to advance action.

We distributed the survey to California cities, counties, and special districts. We only received 13 responses from special districts, likely due to the extreme diversity of special districts and their varying levels of authority over regional climate issues. Over one-third of California's cities and counties, representing over half of the State's population, provided responses to the survey. The body of this report will focus on responses from cities and counties and integrate special district responses into the discussion.

The findings from the survey suggest that the responding jurisdictions are very active and engaged with climate action. Most respondents have adopted or are actively developing a Climate Action Plan or have integrated climate mitigation and adaptation policies into other strategic planning documents. Over half of survey respondents have conducted a GHG emissions inventory and have an emissions reduction target in place. Responding jurisdictions are most active on climate policies related to Transportation, Land Use, and Energy & Buildings but express a growing interest in developing policies that support Climate Equity & EJ priorities, as well as policies that integrate climate risk across other planning efforts. We found that municipalities are most often motivated to take action by state law and regulations but that elected officials can be pivotal in ensuring that staff has the budget and capacity to prioritize climate. Pressure from community organizations and residents was also a common motivator for jurisdictions to take action, particularly on equity and environmental justice issues. However, there continue to be uneven activity levels between jurisdictions of different sizes and income levels.

The results section of this report, divided into four subsections, presents the findings from this survey, providing a summary of responses from the four survey sections:

- » **Climate Planning and Partnerships:** Respondents provided responses to questions about the status of climate planning activities, including Climate Action Plans and the integration of climate change into other planning documents. We also included questions on greenhouse gas emission inventories and collaboration and partnerships.
- » **Climate Equity and Engagement:** Respondents shared the status of activity related to a series of questions on climate equity and engagement, including the identification of priority populations, the status of several equity actions, and approaches to community engagement. For all equity actions, we asked what resources are needed to shift from planning to implementation.
- » **Sectoral Actions and Barriers:** Respondents identified the status of key climate actions across five sectors: Transportation, Energy & Buildings, Land Use, Water & Groundwater, and Waste; and about actions addressing 'Climate Risk.' For all sector-specific actions, we asked respondents what resources could move actions from planning to implementation.
- » **Internal Capacity and Resource Accessibility:** Respondents provided responses to a series of questions regarding capacity (i.e., staffing), resource needs and accessibility, and priority actions.

The report includes findings for many questions, with the responses broken down by jurisdiction size, median household income, and other factors that reveal patterns in activity across jurisdiction types, and concludes with a discussion of emerging patterns and recommendations for next steps.

SECTION 1

Survey Approach and Methodology



Design and Distribution

We crafted the survey based on a review of other surveys with similar scopes and supplemented by interviews conducted with California climate policy experts. The draft survey was pilot tested by three jurisdictions, and feedback was incorporated into the final question list. The California Local Government Climate Activity Survey included questions in four categories:⁴

- » **Climate Planning and Partnerships:** Status of climate planning activities, including Climate Action Plans, General Plans, and other policy documents.
- » **Sector Actions and Barriers:** Actions, activities, and plans to address climate equity and engage the local community in climate planning and policy.
- » **Sector Actions and Barriers:** Implemented and planned actions in six planning sectors and resources/assistance needed to advance from planning to action.
- » **Internal Capacity and Resource Accessibility:** Level and accessibility of internal and external resources to support climate planning and implementation.

We opened the survey in April 2023, and it remained open for responses for five weeks. In order to achieve broad distribution of the survey, we conducted outreach through multiple channels over the course of the survey. To launch the survey, we emailed a link to all Planning and Community Development directors listed on the Planning Directory maintained by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.⁵ At the same time, the League of California Cities (Cal Cities), the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), and the California Special Districts Association (CSDA) distributed the survey via email and newsletter to their members. Following distribution through these channels, The Institute for Local Government distributed the survey through its monthly newsletters and social media channels, e-newsletters, and listservs associated with other local government climate resource networks. We encouraged our respective networks to share the survey widely with local government staff, noting that staff with experience working on climate or sustainability topics would be best suited to fill out the survey. After two weeks, we used targeted outreach to distribute to jurisdictions that were underrepresented in our early set of respondents. During the final week of the survey period, we emailed jurisdictions that had started a survey response but had not yet submitted their entry to invite them to finish the survey.

Following the close of the survey, we conducted a series of follow-up interviews with a select set of survey respondents to provide additional detail.⁶ We selected respondents who represented the regional and socioeconomic diversity of the state and then pared down the list of potential interviewees based on survey responses. In particular, we spoke with jurisdictions that were experiencing a unique challenge, had developed creative solutions to barriers, or were focused on a specific facet of climate action (e.g., financing,

4 The survey also included a pathway to gather information from Special Districts. However, distribution was limited, and we received only a small number of responses. Because of this, this report will focus on responses from cities and counties.

5 Since the directory is only up to date through 2021, CLEE and The Institute for Local Government staff recorded any jurisdictions for which we received an automatic reply and replaced out-of-date contacts with email addresses for the current Planning or Community Development director.

6 The survey included a question on whether the respondent was willing to be contacted for a follow up interview and 79% agreed.

CAP development, or equity policy). We conducted semi-structured interviews with 18 jurisdictions: 10 cities, 6 counties, and 2 special districts. Data gathered from the interviews is used throughout the report to supplement findings from the survey.

Partial Responses

If any partial responses remained at the end of the survey period, we emailed the respondent to ask if they were comfortable with their partial response included in the final data analysis. We included these partial responses unless asked not to. We discarded responses that only included the Jurisdiction Information and Contact Information sections (i.e., did not contain answers to substantive questions).

Duplicate Responses

If we received multiple responses from the same jurisdiction, we kept only the complete (or the most complete) responses and discarded any partial responses. After discarding partial duplicates, our data set still contained complete duplicate responses for nine jurisdictions. We resolved these duplicate responses by deferring to the response from the more senior staff member or the staff member whose role more directly relates to climate planning (e.g., 'Climate Resiliency Officer' or 'Sustainability Coordinator'). If the default survey contained empty or 'Don't Know' answers to specific questions, we supplemented them with the respective answer from the duplicate survey.

SECTION 2

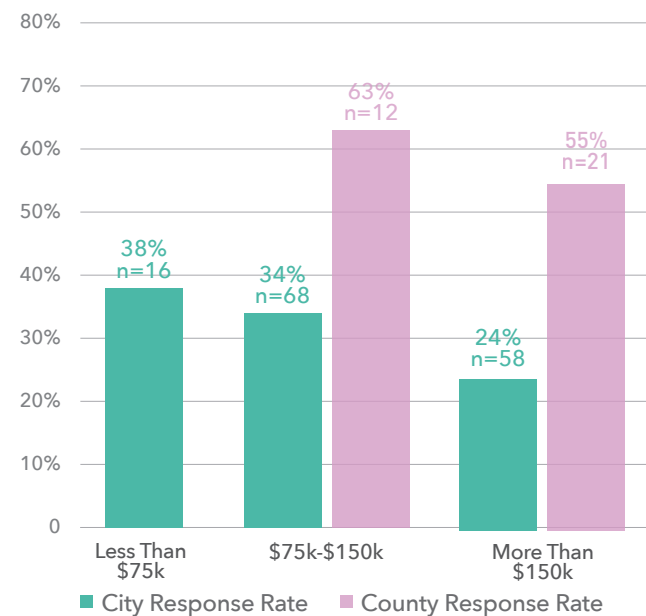
Survey Response Statistics



Table 1 Count of city and county survey responses and associated response rates

Jurisdiction Type	Count of Responses	Response Rate
City	142 ⁷	29.5%
County	33	57.9%
Total and Average	175	34.1%

Chart 1 Response rates by income group for city and county respondents



Key Takeaways

- One-third of cities and over half of counties responded to the survey. Responding jurisdictions represent just over half of the State’s population.
- Compared to state averages, the responding jurisdictions are wealthier and larger.
- The survey responses display helpful patterns, but additional outreach to non-responding jurisdictions is needed to develop a complete picture of climate action.

City and County Response Rates

Thirty percent of cities and 58% of counties responded to the survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 34%. Because larger jurisdictions were more likely to respond, the survey results represent 54% of the State’s population. The respondents include six of the ten most populous counties and eight of the ten most populous cities, including the four largest cities in the state.⁷

Notes on the Survey Sample

Survey response rates vary by jurisdictions’ income, size, and region. Because certain regions and jurisdictional characteristics (e.g., smaller size, rural) are underrepresented in the response sample, the results are best suited to identifying patterns or trends. However, the results are likely not representative of the state as a whole. We can also supplement survey data with anecdotal evidence

from the follow-up interviews we conducted with local government staff, allowing us to ground high-level patterns with more nuanced detail than the survey itself can provide.

Based on response rates, the survey sample over-represents larger and wealthier cities and counties (Charts 1 and 2) and those in more urban areas. We also found that the average share of voters registered as Republican in our sample was lower than the state average for both cities and counties, suggesting an underrepresentation of Republican-leaning municipalities. This is consistent with the regional differences in response rates. Our sample includes a higher proportion of jurisdictions from coastal regions, particularly the San Francisco Bay Area, Los Angeles County, and San Diego County. While we did receive responses from several jurisdictions in western Riverside and San Bernardino counties, very few cities in the Inland Empire or Imperial County submitted responses. We also received a limited number of responses from jurisdictions in the northern part of California, the southern central valley, and the eastern parts of Los Angeles (Table 3).

⁷ San Francisco is both a city and a county but has been categorized as a city for the purpose of this survey.

Chart 2 Response rates by size group for city and county respondents

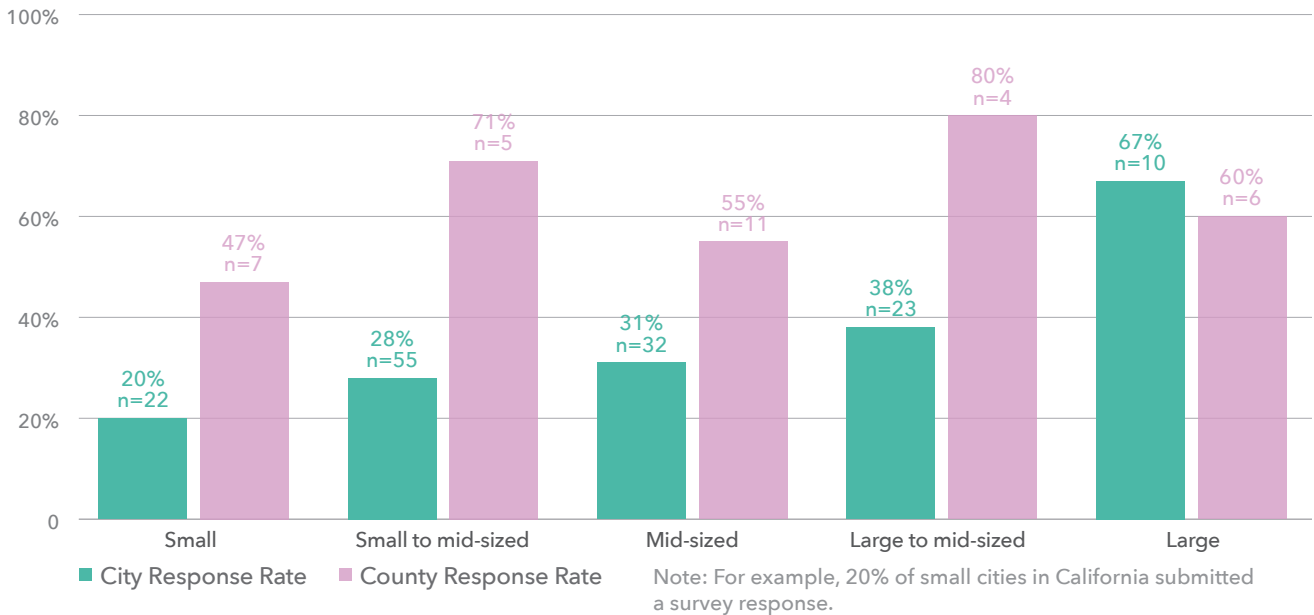


Table 2 Size Group Definitions for Cities and Counties

Size Group	Population (City)	Population (County)
Large	Over 250,000	Over 1,000,000
Large-mid-sized	100,000 - 250,000	500,000 - 1,000,000
Mid-sized	50,000 - 100,000	100,000 - 500,000
Small-mid-sized	10,000 - 50,000	50,000 - 100,000
Small	Under 10,000	Under 50,000

Table 3 Combined city and county response counts and rates by Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

MPO	Count of Responses	Response Rate
Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments	8	38.1%
Butte County Association of Governments	2	33.3%
Metropolitan Transportation Commission	44	40.4%
Non-MPO Rural RTPA Area	21	31.3%
Sacramento Area Council of Governments	8	29.6%
San Diego Association of Governments	10	52.6%
San Joaquin Valley Combined MPOs	18	25.4%
San Luis Obispo Council of Governments	5	62.5%
Santa Barbara County Association of Governments	5	55.6%
Shasta County Regional Transportation Planning Agency	1	25.0%
Southern California Association of Governments	53	26.9%
Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization	0	0.0%

SECTION 3
Survey Results





Survey Results: Climate Planning and Partnerships

Key Takeaways

- A majority of survey respondents have adopted or are in the process of developing a Climate Action Plan, but the absence of a plan does not seem to limit climate action.
- Climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are present across a wide range of planning documents, suggesting greater integration of climate policy throughout government operations.
- Responding cities and counties are engaging in a wide array of partnerships to address climate, particularly with neighboring jurisdictions.

Climate Action Plans, Emissions Reduction Targets, and Emissions Inventories

Question 1: Does your jurisdiction have an adopted climate action plan or equivalent?

Three-quarters of city and county respondents have adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) or are in the process of developing or formally adopting one (Chart 3). Just over half of responding cities already have an adopted CAP, as do just under half of responding counties. Over 14 million people live in jurisdictions that responded that they do have an adopted CAP. Of the jurisdictions that have a CAP, about two-thirds have completed a CEQA review of the CAP.

Smaller jurisdictions and jurisdictions with lower median household incomes were less likely to have an adopted CAP (Charts 4 and 5). The CAP development process can be both costly and time-consuming, two barriers that were highlighted in our follow-up conversations with local government staff.

Question 2: What year was your jurisdiction's Climate Action Plan last updated?

Half of responding jurisdictions have updated their CAP in the last three years, while just under half went through an update between 2010 and 2020. Only 2% of adopted CAPs have not been updated since before 2010 (Chart 6).

Chart 3 Percentage of city and county responses by CAP adoption status

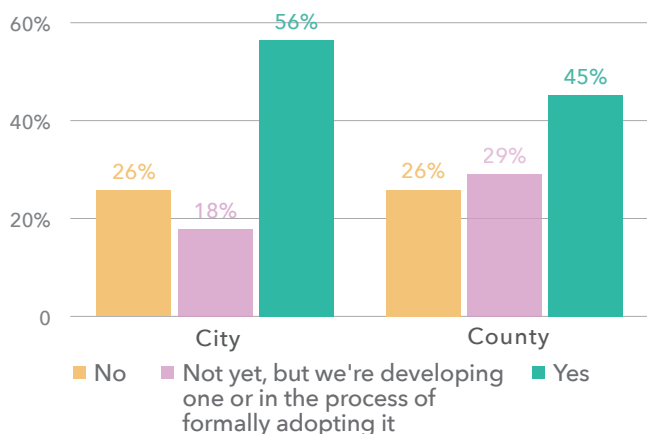


Chart 4 Percentage of responding jurisdictions in each income group by CAP adoption status

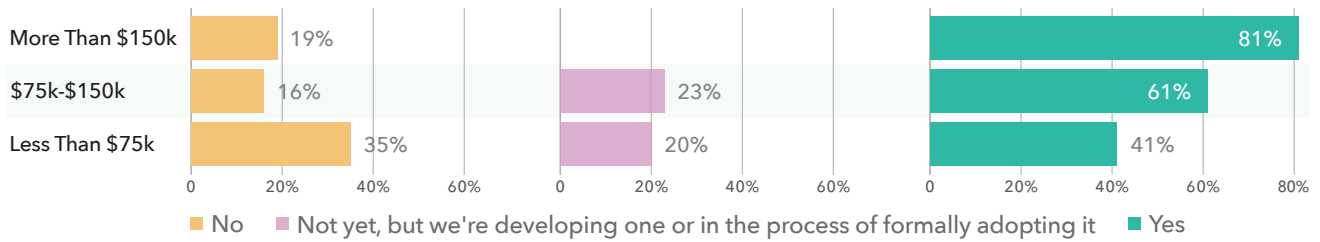


Chart 5 Percentage of responding jurisdictions in each size group by CAP adoption status

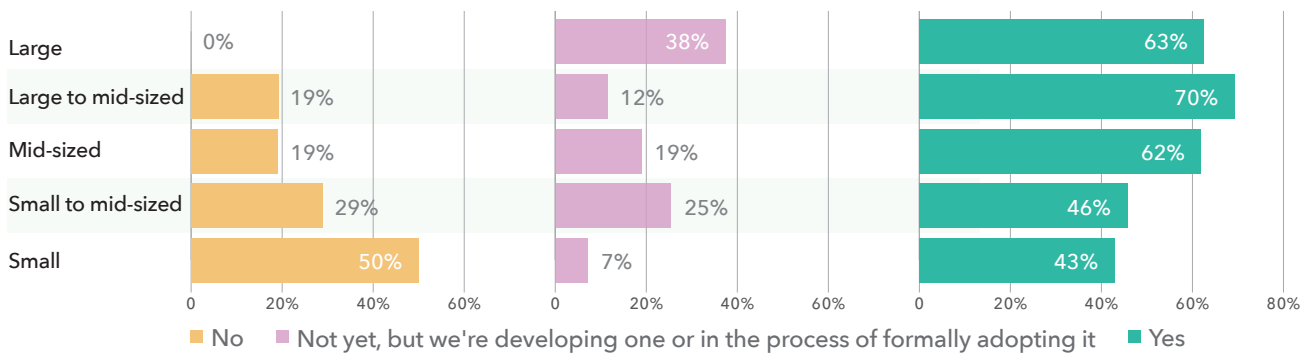
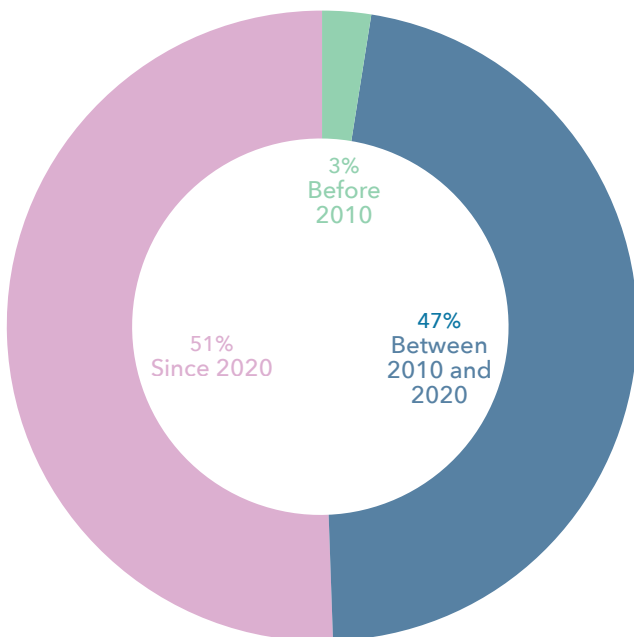


Chart 6 Percentage of responding jurisdictions by year of last CAP update (n = 81)



Question 3: Does your jurisdiction have an adopted GHG emissions reduction target, goal or resolution?

Just over half of respondents have an adopted greenhouse gas emissions reduction target, goal, or resolution. Another 12% are in the process of developing a target (Chart 7).

Question 4: What is your jurisdiction’s adopted GHG emissions reduction target?

While just over half of jurisdictions have an adopted climate target, these targets are diverse. Just over one-third of respondents with an adopted target have a goal to achieve carbon neutrality (Chart 8).

Question 5: Has your jurisdiction developed a GHG emissions inventory?

Over half of responding jurisdictions have developed a GHG emissions inventory, and another 7% are planning to do so. 46% of jurisdictions that have completed a GHG emissions inventory have taken inventory of both government operations and community-wide activities. However, if a respondent has only completed one or the other, they were more likely to have developed an inventory of community-wide activities than government operations (Charts 9 and 10).

Chart 7 GHG Emissions Reduction Target, Goal, or Resolution

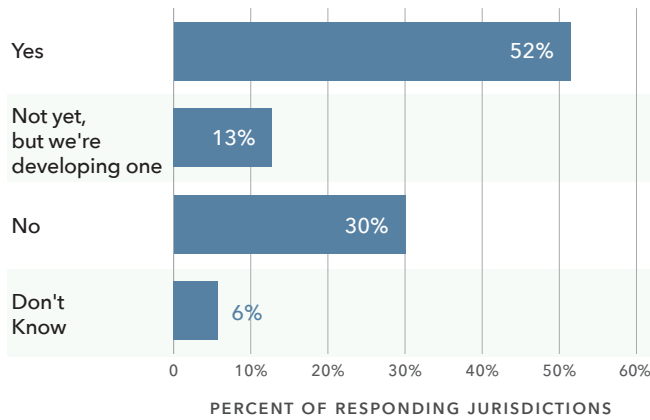


Chart 10 GHG Emissions Inventory: Community and Government Inventories

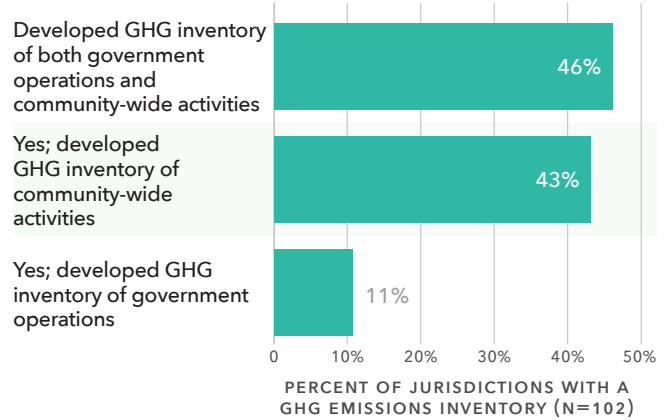


Chart 8 Percentage of responding jurisdictions by GHG emissions reduction target (n=84)

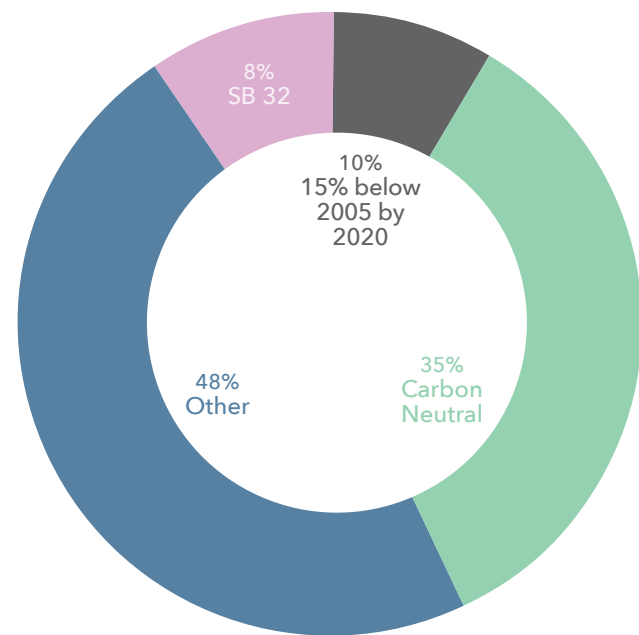
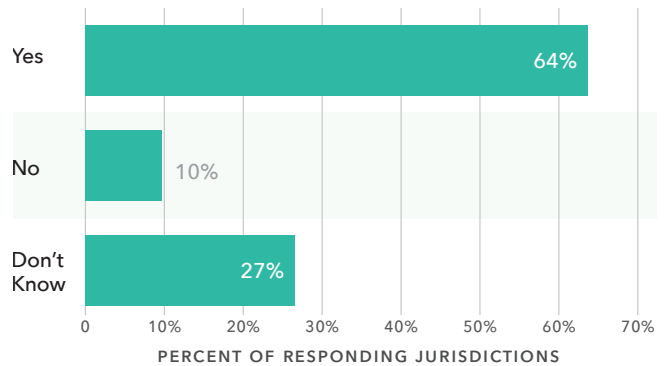


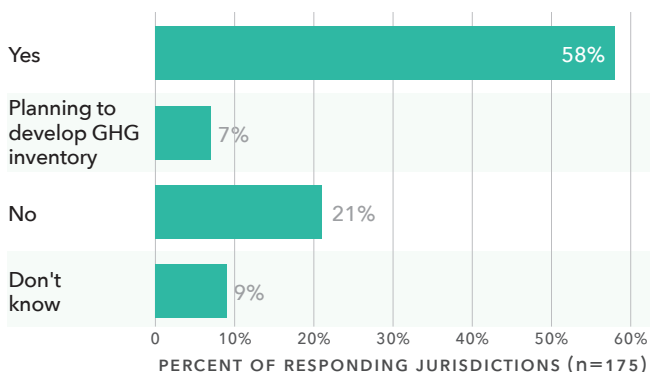
Chart 11 Emissions Inventory Includes Methane



Question 6: Does your emissions inventory include methane?⁸

Of the responding jurisdictions that indicated they had completed an emissions inventory (102 jurisdictions), 63% have included methane in their inventory (Chart 11).

Chart 9 GHG Emissions Inventory



⁸ We included a question on whether GHG emission inventories included methane because local governments play an important role in monitoring and reducing methane emissions. Municipalities can support efforts to identify methane leaks in gas distribution systems, reduce landfill waste, and partner with landfill operators to invest in methane recapture technology. We discuss the role of local government in the State's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy in more detail in Section 4.

Chart 12 Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies in Policy and Planning Documents

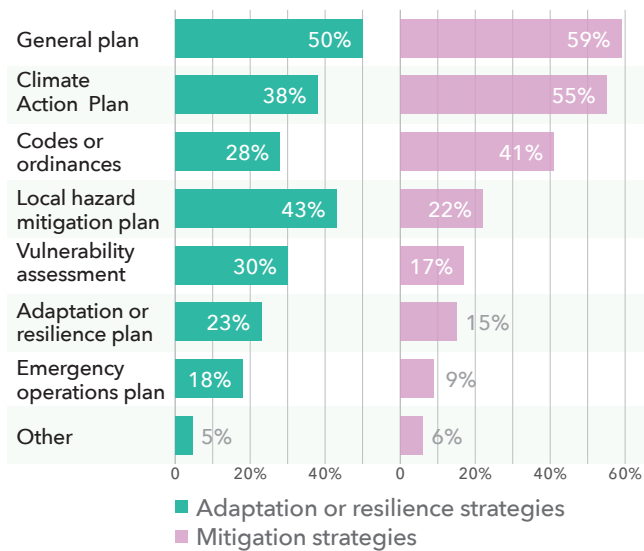
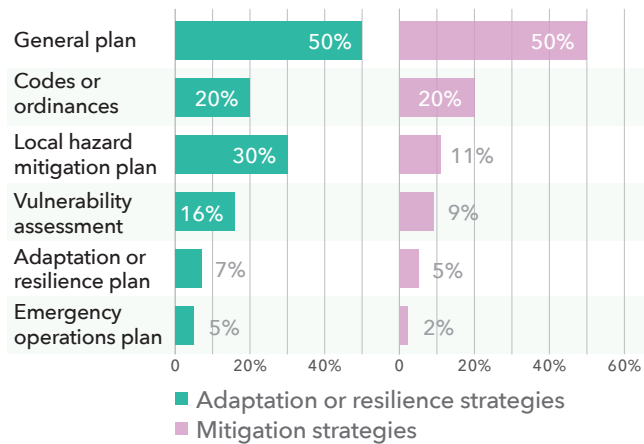


Chart 13 No CAP: Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies in Policy and Planning Documents (n=44)



Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies in Planning Documents

The survey responses show that climate policies are not confined to climate-specific plans but are also often spread across other local planning documents. This is consistent with an increase in state laws requiring that climate change be considered in broader local and regional planning processes and plan adoption.

Question 7: Which of these documents, if your jurisdiction has them, address climate change through emission reduction strategies and/or climate adaptation/resilience strategies?

Just over half of respondents indicated that they have included climate mitigation strategies and climate adaptation or resilience strategies in their General Plans. While 41% of respondents said that they have mitigation strategies in Codes or Ordinances, climate adaptation strategies were more common in Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (43% of respondents) and Vulnerability Assessments (30% of respondents). Responding cities were slightly more likely to have strategies in codes and ordinances (46% have mitigation strategies and 30% have adaptation strategies) than counties were (15% have mitigation strategies and 18% have adaptation strategies), but otherwise, city and county responses were fairly similar (Chart 12).

The survey responses also show that jurisdictions without a Climate Action Plan are still taking climate action. Of the responding jurisdictions that did not have a climate action plan (44 jurisdictions), 41 indicated that they have climate policies in at least one planning document, which was most often the General Plan (Chart 13).

Chart 14 Percentage of respondents that selected each 'Public and Private Partnerships' action (n=175)

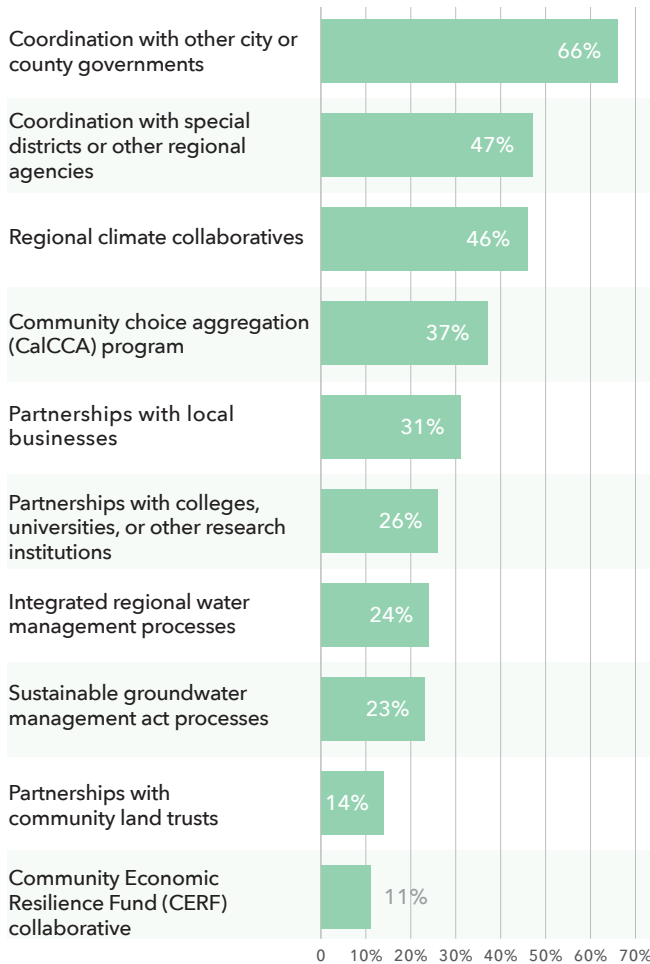
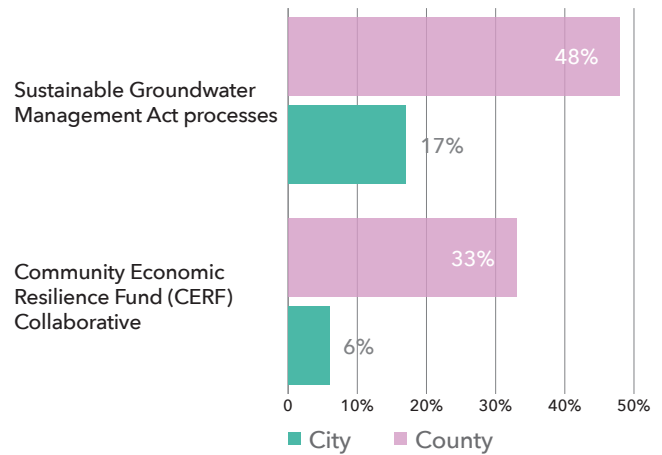


Chart 15 Percentage of city and county respondents that selected 'Sustainable Groundwater Management Act process' and 'Community Economic Resilience Fund Collaborative' as partnership action taken



Public and Private Partnerships

Both city and county respondents are engaging in a high level of partnerships with other municipalities. About half of respondents said they coordinate with Special Districts and other regional agencies on climate topics. 46% said that they engage with a Regional Climate Collaborative, and 37% are participants in a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program. 145 jurisdictions (82% of respondents) selected at least one option (Chart 14).

Question 8: We are interested in understanding how you are working with other public and private sector partners on climate planning efforts. Please indicate if you are participating in any of the following activities.

County respondents were more likely to engage in Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) processes and the Community Economic Resilience Fund (CERF) Collaborative than cities, likely because both processes occur at regional scales and frequently operate across jurisdictional boundaries. Additionally, counties have a unique role under SGMA as the de facto Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA) for medium- and high-priority basins outside the management area of an already-existing GSA (Chart 15).⁹

9 California Department of Water Resources. Groundwater Sustainability Agencies. 2023.



Survey Results: Equity and Engagement

Recognizing that local climate policy must effectively address disproportionate environmental and climate impact burdens and benefit distribution, the survey aimed to capture municipalities' efforts to address climate equity within their jurisdictions. This section of the report summarizes jurisdictions' activities related to climate equity and environmental justice, identification of 'priority communities' (see Box 1), community engagement and collaboration efforts, and tribal engagement.

Key Takeaways

- More equity actions are in the planning phase than the implementation phase for most of the sectoral actions (see the following section, "Survey Results: Sectoral Actions and Barriers").
- Implementation of equity actions is more common in larger jurisdictions and those that have a median household income between \$75,000 and \$150,000.
- Over half of respondents use certain tools or metrics to identify priority communities in their jurisdiction.
- Almost three-quarters of respondents conduct community engagement activities, and over half engage with tribal governments on climate planning and policy design.

Climate Equity and Environmental Justice

Question 11: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Climate Equity and Environmental Justice' in your jurisdiction?

The survey asked respondents to identify the status of several key actions related to climate equity and environmental justice (EJ). These actions address equity in planning, policy development, and program implementation. Chart 16 summarizes the percentage of responding jurisdictions 'not taking,' 'planning to take,' and 'implemented or in the process of implementing' each climate equity and EJ action. The most frequently implemented action was the development of an Environmental Justice Element or the inclusion of environmental justice policies in other General Plan elements, a requirement for

Equity Language and Terminology

The survey used the term ‘priority community’ to refer to communities that are currently and/or were historically disproportionately burdened by or less able to recover from adverse environmental impacts, including communities and populations considered to be disadvantaged, marginalized, under-resourced, underserved, and vulnerable. This definition was intended to be broader than the State’s definition of ‘disadvantaged communities’ (DACs), per SB 535, but still aligned with the California Climate Investments initiative’s use of the term ‘priority’ to emphasize the heightened need in these populations.¹⁰ The term was also intended to encompass ‘disadvantaged communities’ as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency’s Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, developed in response to the Biden administration’s Justice40 initiative.¹¹ We recognize that jurisdictions may use a number of other terms and definitions to refer to similar communities, including ‘impacted communities,’ ‘communities of concern,’ ‘vulnerable communities,’¹² and ‘environmental justice communities.’ Jurisdictions may also identify populations by factors other than those used in the above definitions, including age, income, housing status, physical health, and mental health.

We recognize that the use of such terms, often out of convenience or convention, inherently generalizes populations.¹³ These terms, particularly those related to vulnerability, can also disempower communities by erasing the institutional and governmental systems that cause and contribute to risk, thus implying that the community is to blame. When applicable, we aim to use specific, inclusive, person-first language to refer to communities made vulnerable to climate impacts by social (e.g., discrimination, racism, etc.) and government (e.g., redlining, siting of pollution-producing facilities, under-investment, etc.) systems.¹⁴

all local governments under Senate Bill 1000. Just over one-third of respondents have achieved SB 1000 compliance, with another third planning to do so (Chart 16).

Two-thirds of jurisdictions said they had integrated climate equity and EJ into existing plans or were planning to do so. However, the similar implementation and planning rates between these two actions could suggest that jurisdictions consider incorporating EJ policies into other General Plan elements to be an example of integrating EJ into existing plans.

We further broke down the distribution of city responses by population size and median household income. Mid-sized and large responding jurisdictions were more likely to have implemented climate equity and EJ actions than small and small-mid-sized jurisdictions (Chart 17).

Responding jurisdictions in the middle-income group are the most likely to have implemented policies related to climate equity and EJ (Chart 18). Jurisdictions in the lowest-income group are generally less active in implementation, with the exception of the Environmental Justice Element action. As noted earlier, this exception can likely be attributed to the fact that this is the only action in this category that is required by law.¹⁵ However, very few of the 16 responding jurisdictions in the highest income group have ‘implemented or are in the process of implementing’ any of the climate equity and EJ actions, including efforts to achieve SB 1000 compliance (Chart 18).

10 *What are priority populations?* California Climate Investments. Retrieved June 5, 2023, from <https://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/priority-populations>

11 White House Council on Environmental Quality (n.d.). About. Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/about#3/33.47/-97.5>

12 Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) (2018, July 1). *Defining Vulnerable Communities in the Context of Climate Adaptation*. Governor’s Office of Planning and Research. Retrieved June 11, 2023, from https://opr.ca.gov/docs/20180723-Vulnerable_Communities.pdf

13 Alliance for Healthier Communities (n.d.). *Inclusive and Empathetic Language Use Guidelines*. Retrieved June 11, 2023, from <https://www.cityofboise.org/media/12897/optional-readings-week-1.pdf>

14 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) (2021, October 21). *Equity Language Guide: Glossary of Terms*. Retrieved June 11, 2023, from <https://www.nrpa.org/siteassets/nrpa-equity-language-guide-10-21-2021.pdf>

15 Land use: general plans: safety and environmental justice, Cal. S.B. 1000, Chapter 587 (Cal. Stat. 2016).

Chart 16 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Climate Equity and Environmental Justice'

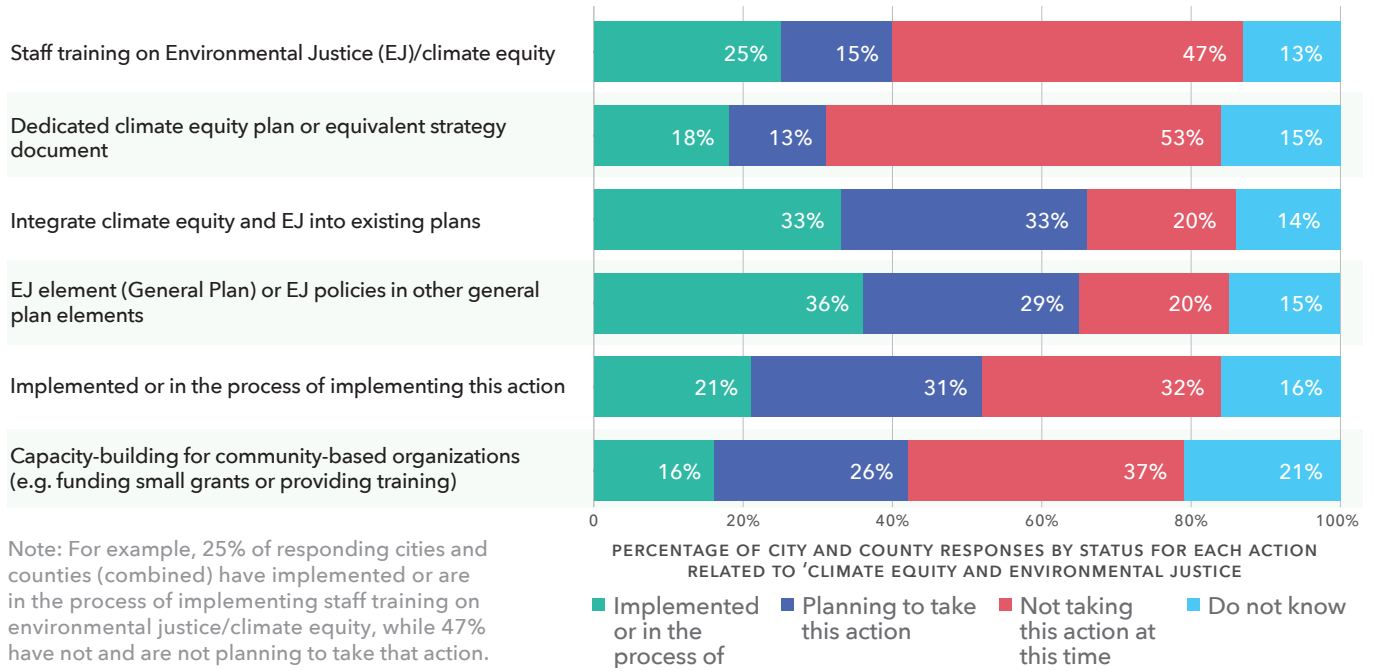


Chart 17 Percentage of respondents that have implemented each Climate Equity and EJ action by size group

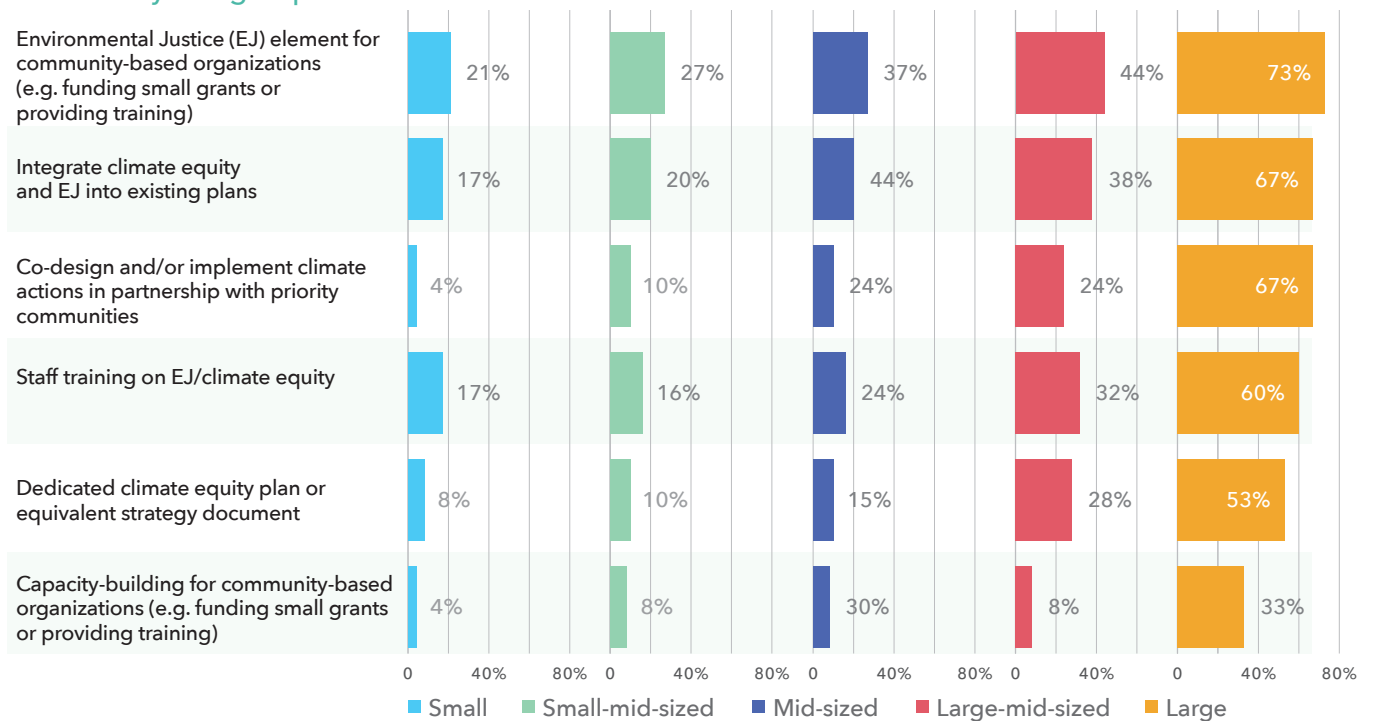


Chart 18 Percentage of respondents that have implemented each Climate Equity and EJ action by income group

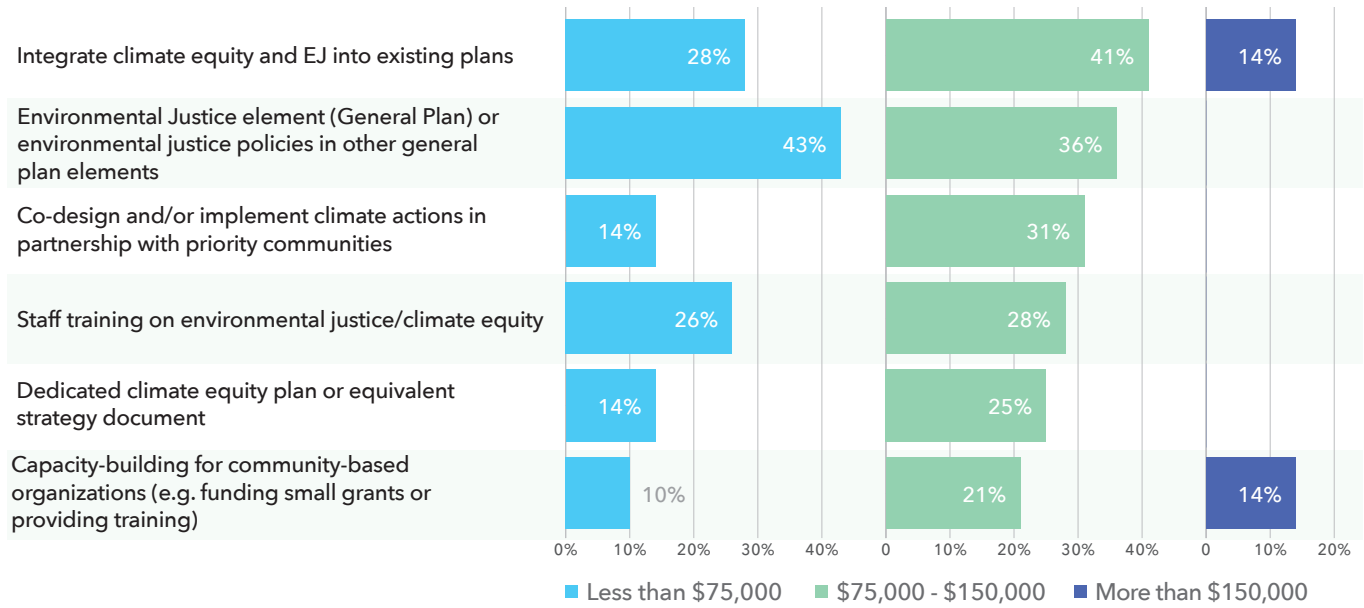
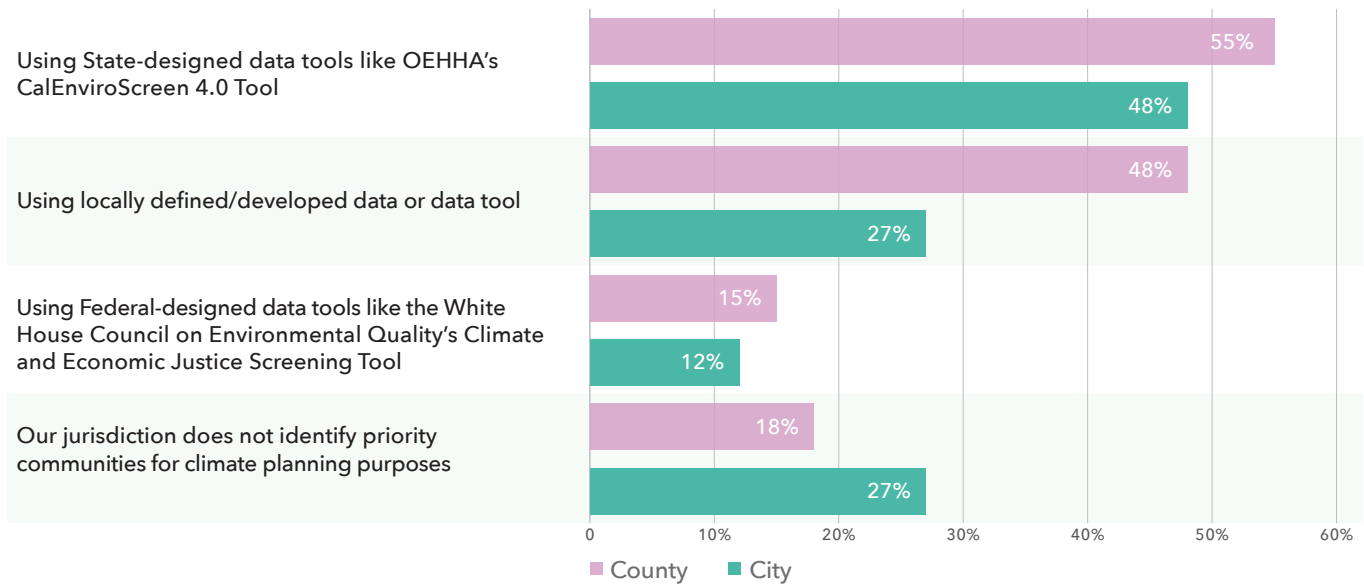


Chart 19 Percent of city and county respondents that selected each tool for identifying ‘priority communities’



Identifying Priority Communities

Question 12: How does your jurisdiction identify priority communities for climate planning purposes?

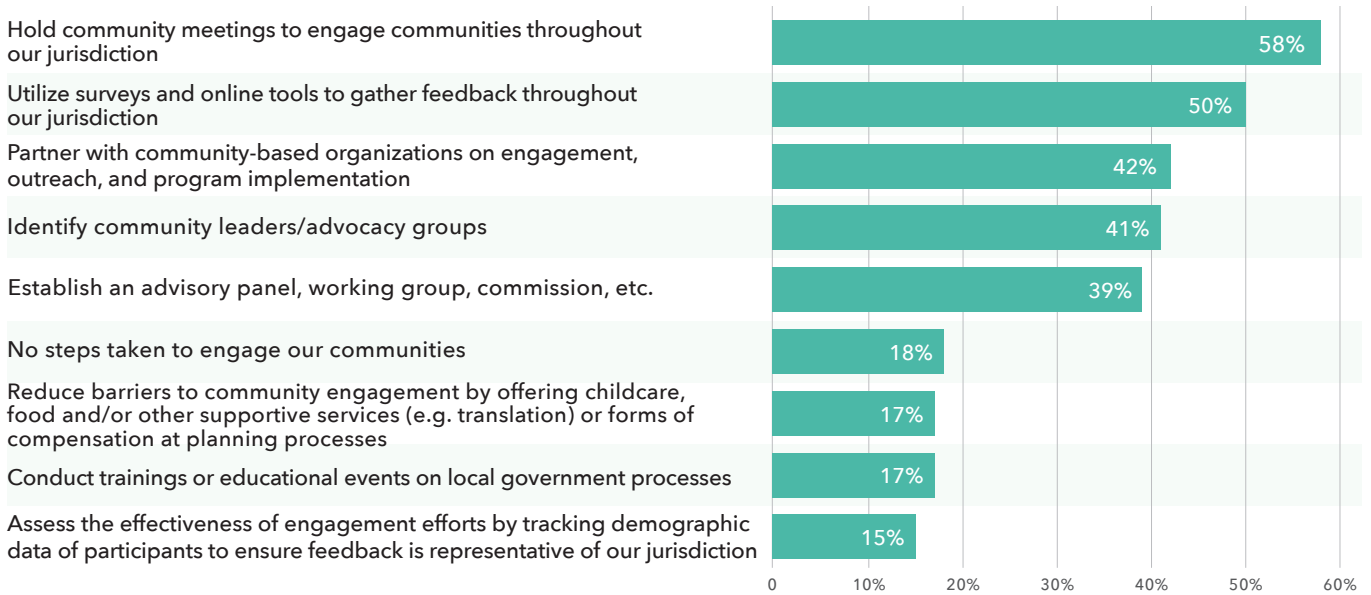
Identifying the communities living or working within jurisdictional boundaries that have been made more vulnerable to climate change by government policy or lack of investment is a critical first step for jurisdictions aiming to design and implement equitable climate action. Survey results show that about half of responding cities and counties use state-designated tools, like OEHHA’s CalEnviroScreen 4.0 Tool, to identify such communities (Chart 19). Half of responding counties and a quarter of responding cities use locally defined or developed data to identify communities, while under 20% of respondents in both categories said they use federal tools.

Locally-defined/developed data or data tools listed by responding jurisdictions include:

- Data from utilities about customers/residents that frequently have difficulty paying utility bills, including data on customers enrolled in the California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) and Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) programs;
- Flood maps;
- Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy definitions of environmental justice communities; and
- Definitions for rural and unincorporated communities.

Several jurisdictions that do not identify priority communities for climate planning purposes clarified in the ‘Other’ text entry box that no communities within their jurisdiction meet the state or federal criteria for ‘priority communities.’ However, some of these responses noted that they do use other population characteristics to identify communities that could experience specific or non-place-based vulnerabilities; these include youth, older adults, people experiencing homelessness, English-language learners, and people with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities.

Chart 20 Percentage of respondents (cities and counties combined) that selected each community engagement option (n=175)



Engagement

Question 13: Which of the following steps has your jurisdiction taken to engage communities in climate planning?

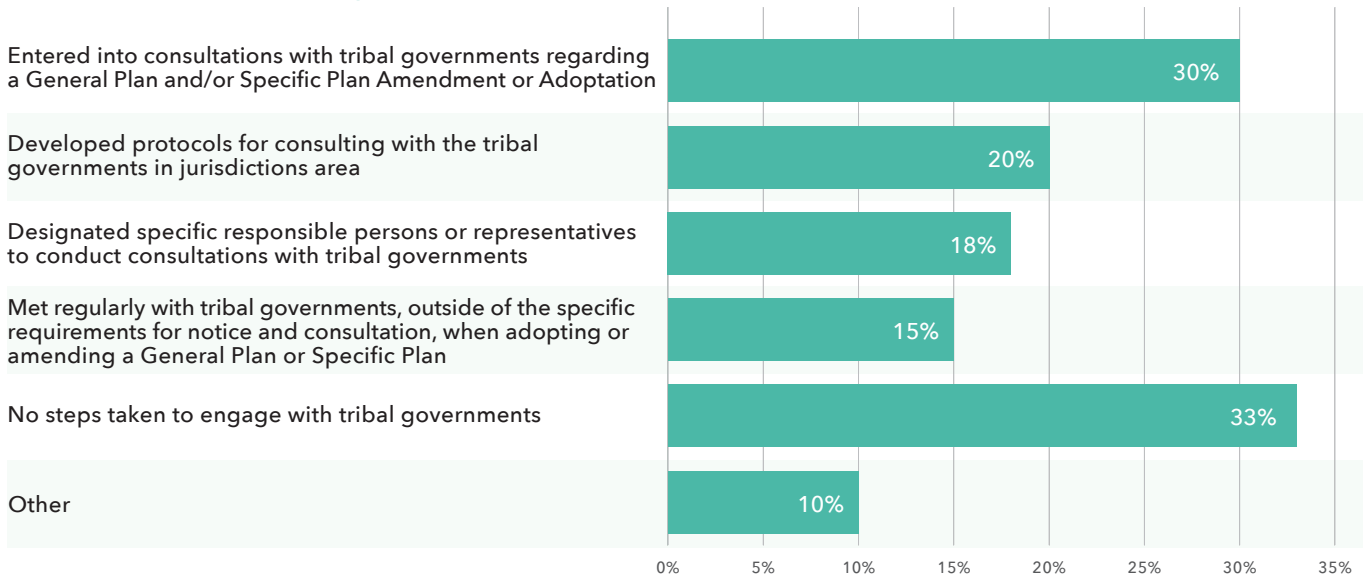
Responses from cities and counties on actions taken to engage their communities in climate planning were very similar. The most frequently taken action was to ‘hold community meetings to engage communities throughout our jurisdiction,’ with over half of respondents indicating that they had taken that action. 50% of responding jurisdictions use surveys and other online tools to gather feedback. Other frequently taken actions include partnering with community-based organizations on engagement, identifying community leaders and advocacy groups, and establishing an advisory panel or working group.

18% of respondents said they had taken no steps to engage their communities, although one of those respondents noted that an upcoming General Plan update would involve community engagement activities. Out of 175 respondents, 122 (70%) indicated that they have taken at least one of the listed community engagement actions (Chart 20).

Question 14: How has your jurisdiction engaged with tribal governments?

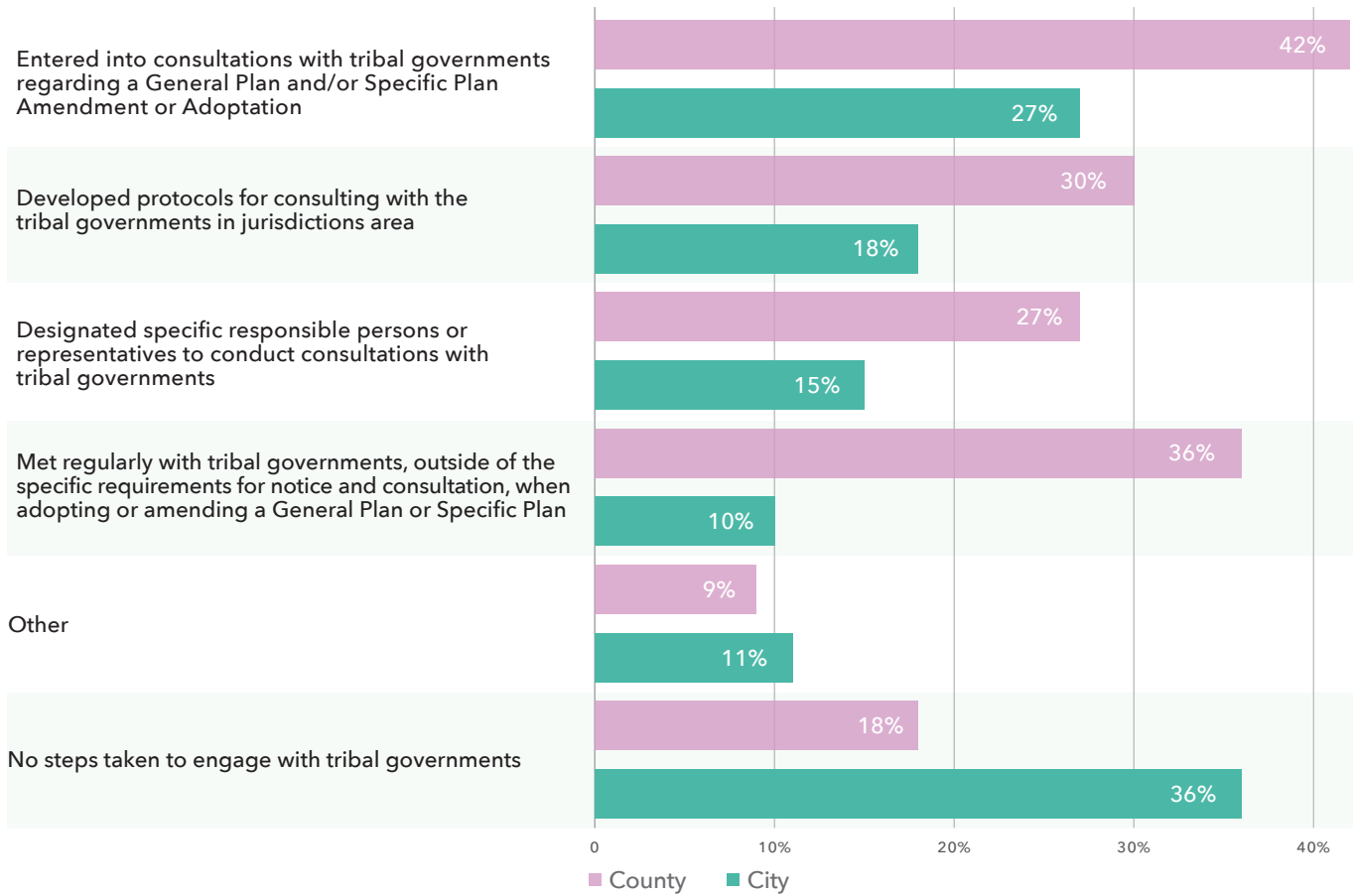
Just over half of all responding jurisdictions (96 out of 175) indicated that they have engaged with tribal governments via at least one of the listed options, with the most common engagement strategy being consultation regarding a plan amendment or update (30% of respondents). One-third of respondents said they had taken no steps to engage with tribal governments (Chart 21).

Chart 21 Percentage of respondents that have taken each action related to tribal engagement (n=175)



The survey responses show that engagement rates with tribal governments differed between city and county respondents. A higher percentage of responding counties indicated that they had engaged with tribal governments across all survey options. Only six of 33 counties (18%) said they had taken no steps to engage, compared to 51 out of 142 cities (35%) (Chart 22).

Chart 22 Percentage of city and county respondents that have taken each action related to tribal engagement



Question 15: Which tribal governments has your jurisdiction engaged with on climate planning efforts?

34% of responding jurisdictions provided examples of the tribal governments that they have engaged with on climate planning efforts. Of the 60 who provided responses, 19 listed multiple tribal nations.



Survey Results: Sectoral Actions and Barriers

Key Takeaways

- All seven policy areas covered by the survey saw the implementation of at least one action related to climate change by more than 50% of respondents.
- Responding jurisdictions were most active in the Land Use, Transportation, and Energy & Buildings sectors.
- Across all policy areas, respondents were most likely to identify staff capacity and funding as resource needs for moving climate actions from the planning stage to the implementation stage.

Overall, responding jurisdictions are most active in policy areas related to Land Use, Transportation, Energy, and Buildings. Policy and program implementation is highest for jurisdictions with adopted CAPs or jurisdictions that are in the process of developing CAPs, but even jurisdictions without CAPs have had success in policy implementation, particularly for actions related to Land Use, Energy, and Buildings (Charts 23 and 24).

We also looked at implementation across policy topics when responding jurisdictions were grouped by median household income and population size. Respondents in the lowest income group were slightly less active across all policy topics, with the exception of Land Use and Climate Equity and EJ actions. Generally, respondents in the mid-sized to large-size groups were more active than respondents in the small-mid-sized and small-size groups. The lone exception is for Climate Risk actions; across all size groups, about 70-80% of respondents have taken action related to Climate Risk (Charts 25 and 26).

Chart 23 Percentage of respondents that have implemented at least one action per topic. Null values have been excluded.

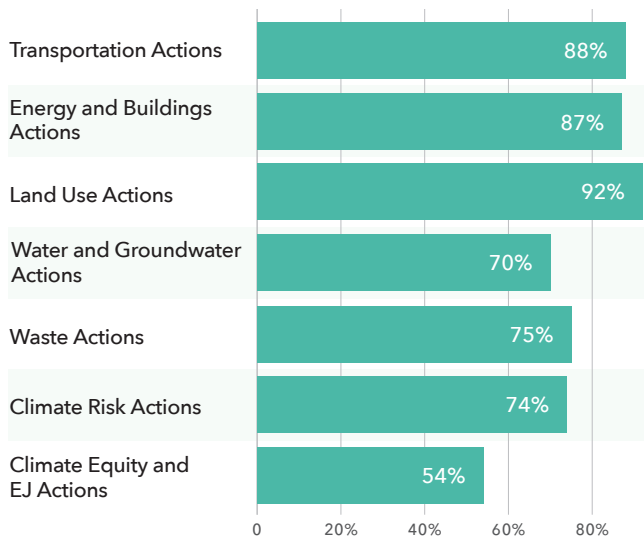


Chart 24 Percentage of respondents that have implemented at least one action per topic by CAP status

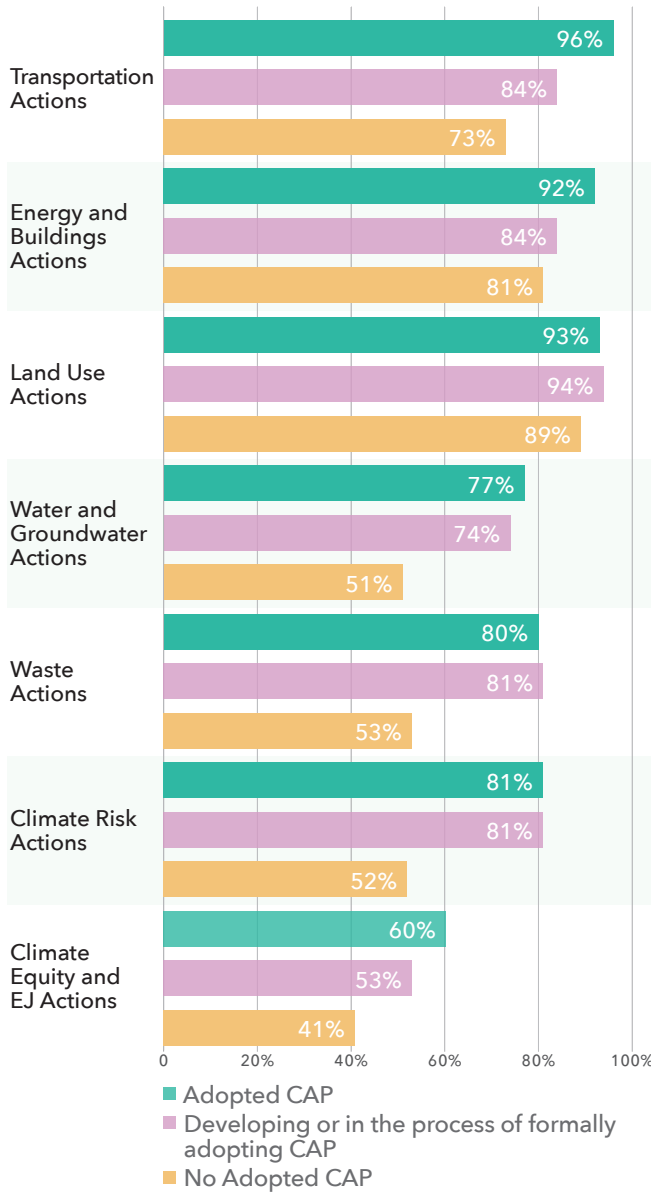


Chart 25 Percentage of respondents that have implemented at least one action per topic by income group

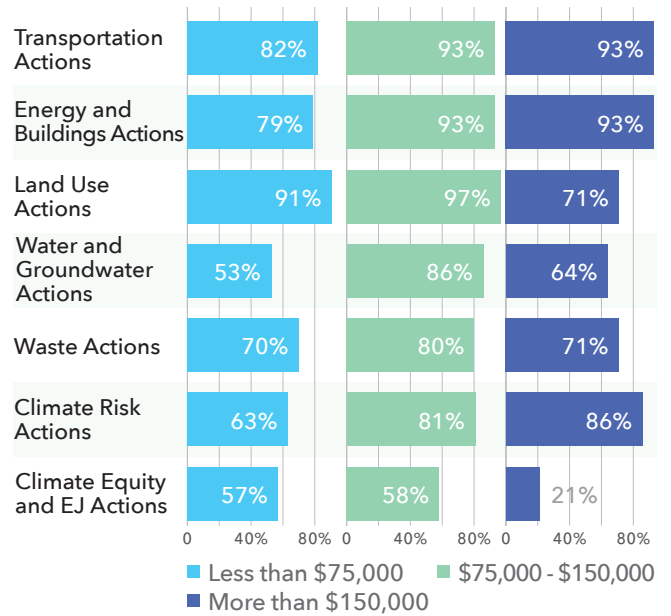
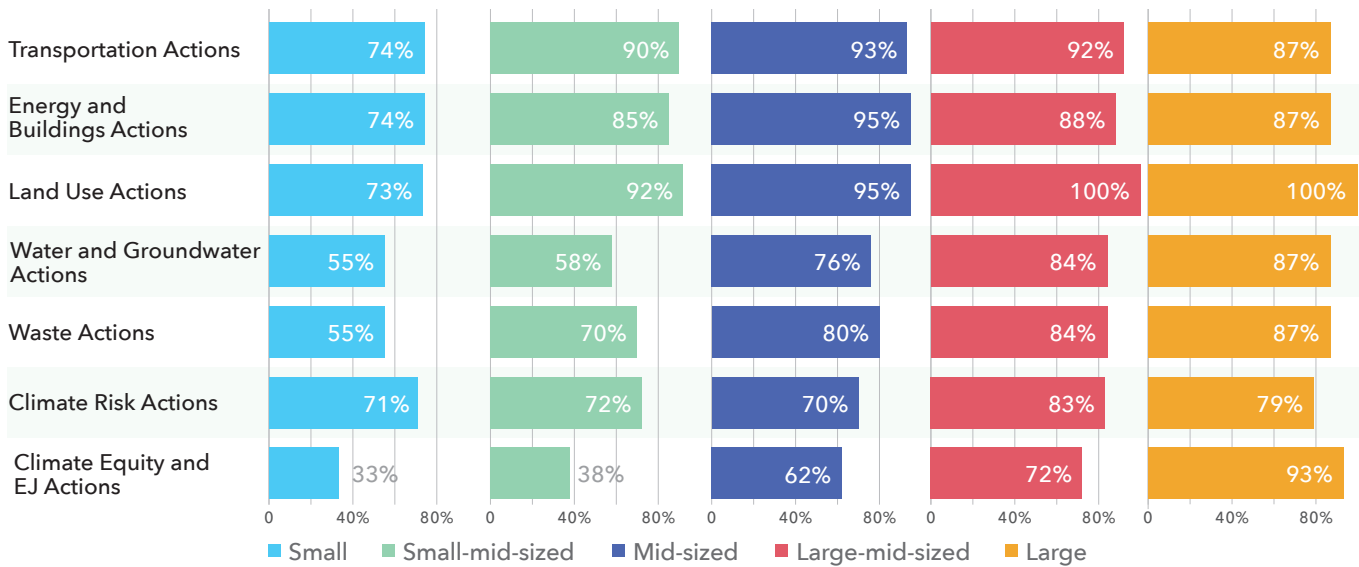


Chart 26 Percentage of respondents that have implemented at least one action per topic by size group



In addition to asking about current actions implemented or planned, the survey asked respondents to select from a list the resources or conditions that would support the implementation of actions that they identified were currently in the planning stage.¹⁶

Across all policy areas, respondents were most likely to identify staff capacity and funding as resource needs for moving climate actions from the planning stage to the implementation stage. Respondents were least likely to identify inter-governmental partnerships and community or stakeholder partnerships as resource needs, with a few action-specific exceptions (Table 4).

Climate Equity and Environmental Justice is a cross-cutting set of planning and actions (i.e., not a sector). However, we have included it in the discussion of resource needs to support because many actions were identified as being in the planning stage, and equity considerations are critical across all sectors.

Respondents frequently selected “Funding” and “Staff Capacity” as key resource needs for Climate Equity and EJ actions. Respondents also identified “Staff Expertise” and “Technical Assistance” as needs for supporting implementation, particularly for actions related to equitable climate planning and equity-focused trainings. While less than half of respondents, on average, selected “Community or Stakeholder Partnerships” as a resource need, this was the highest share of jurisdictions when compared to all other policy areas (Table 5).

¹⁶ The survey asked about resources needed only for actions that the respondent indicated were in the “Planning to take this action” stage. The survey was designed so this question populated based on each individual respondents answers.

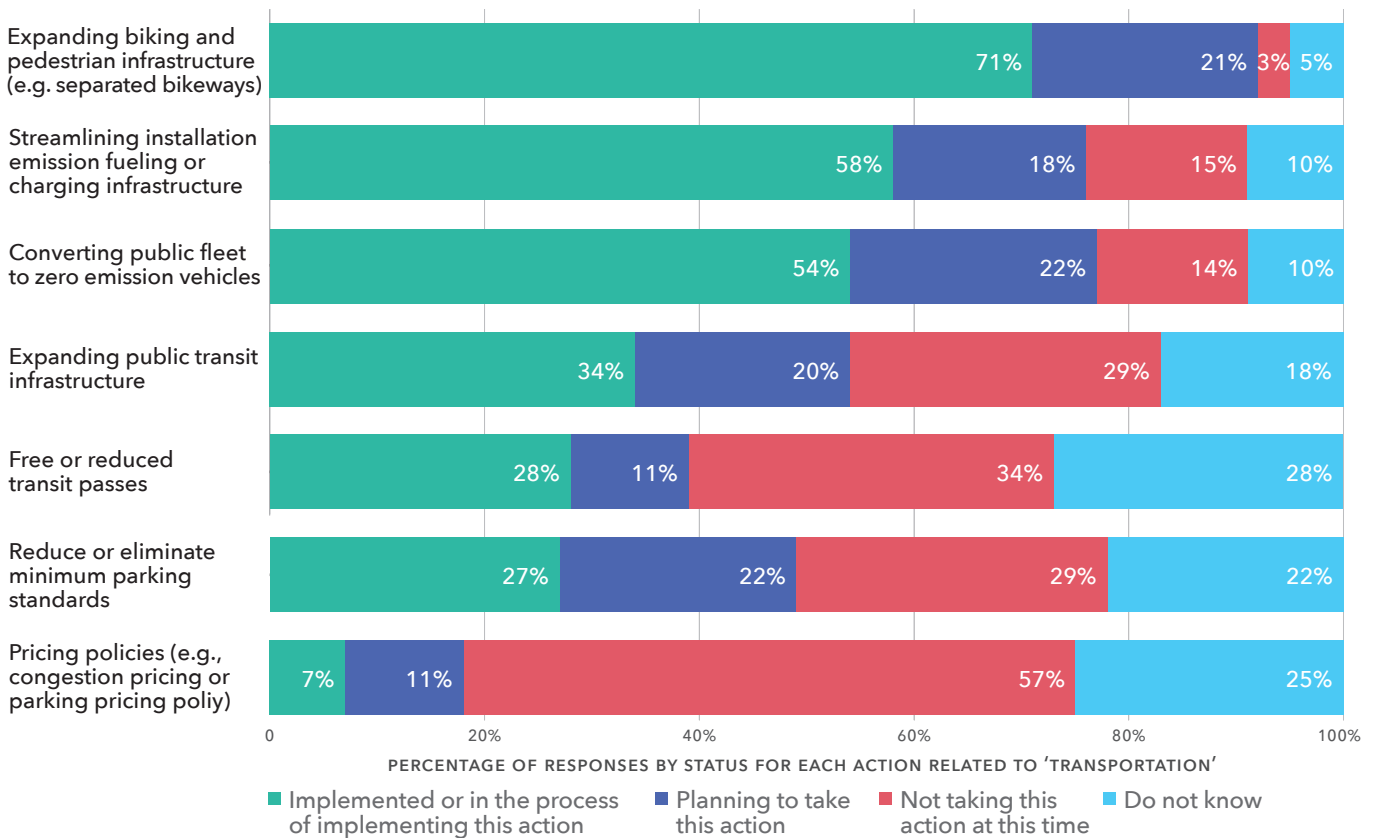
Table 4 Average percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving actions in each policy area from the planning stage to the implementation stage

Policy Area	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Transportation	69%	50%	26%	33%	24%	17%	34%
Energy & Buildings	51%	72%	46%	50%	19%	24%	32%
Land Use	70%	71%	25%	35%	17%	25%	33%
Water & Groundwater	73%	72%	34%	46%	13%	22%	39%
Waste	70%	72%	32%	46%	32%	17%	21%
Climate Risk	67%	74%	62%	60%	43%	25%	31%
Climate Equity and EJ	73%	71%	52%	55%	27%	43%	41%

Table 5 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Climate Equity and EJ action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Climate Equity and EJ Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Staff training on environmental justice/ climate equity	79%	79%	75%	75%	33%	46%	38%
Dedicated climate equity plan or equivalent strategy document	90%	71%	57%	57%	24%	33%	48%
Integrate climate equity and EJ into existing plans	61%	67%	43%	57%	22%	35%	35%
Environmental Justice Element (General Plan) or Environmental Justice policies in other General Plan elements	65%	65%	48%	48%	22%	33%	41%
Co-design and/or implement climate actions in partnership with priority communities	69%	73%	44%	44%	31%	56%	33%

Chart 27 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Transportation'



Transportation

Question 16: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Transportation' in your jurisdiction?

The most frequently implemented action related to transportation amongst responding jurisdictions was the expansion of biking and pedestrian infrastructure; 71% of respondents indicated that they had taken this action. Actions related to pricing policies and minimum parking standards, two of the more politically controversial actions on the list, were the least commonly implemented (Chart 27).

For Transportation sector actions, respondents were most likely to select "Funding" and "Staff Capacity" as resource needs. Of note, 56% of respondents identified "Institutional or Political Will" as a need for supporting the reduction or elimination of minimum parking standards; 65% of respondents identified the same need for implementing pricing policies, suggesting greater institutional barriers to implementation for these over other actions (Table 6).

Table 6 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Transportation action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation

Transportation Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Expanding biking and pedestrian infrastructure (e.g., separated bikeways)	97%	66%	38%	38%	28%	25%	25%
Streamlining installation of zero emission fueling or charging infrastructure	70%	56%	33%	41%	30%	7%	19%
Converting public fleet to zero emission vehicles	94%	53%	44%	38%	18%	15%	29%
Expanding public transit infrastructure	80%	53%	27%	40%	37%	27%	17%
Free or reduced transit passes	81%	25%	19%	25%	38%	13%	31%
Reduce or eliminate minimum parking standards	29%	56%	18%	29%	12%	12%	56%
Pricing policies (e.g., congestion pricing or parking pricing policy)	29%	41%	6%	24%	6%	18%	65%

Energy and Buildings

Question 17: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Energy & Buildings' in your jurisdiction?

In the 'Energy & Buildings' sector category, responding jurisdictions were most likely to have implemented an online permitting system for solar and solar-plus-storage systems (51% of respondents). Other frequently implemented actions include programs to support energy conservation and efficiency, green building reach codes, and programs to support building electrification (Chart 28).

Responding jurisdictions that participate in a Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) program (73 jurisdictions out of 175) are more active in implementation across almost all 'Energy & Buildings' actions than those that do not participate in a CCA (Chart 29).

Funding was a slightly less common need for Energy & Building actions compared to other sectors and policy areas. However, staff capacity remains a key need, and respondents further indicated that "Staff Expertise" and "Technical Assistance" would facilitate the implementation of Energy & Building actions. Technical Assistance (TA) was identified as being particularly important for streamlining the installation of distributed renewable energy systems; 70% of respondents selected TA as a need (Table 7).

Chart 28 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Energy and Buildings'

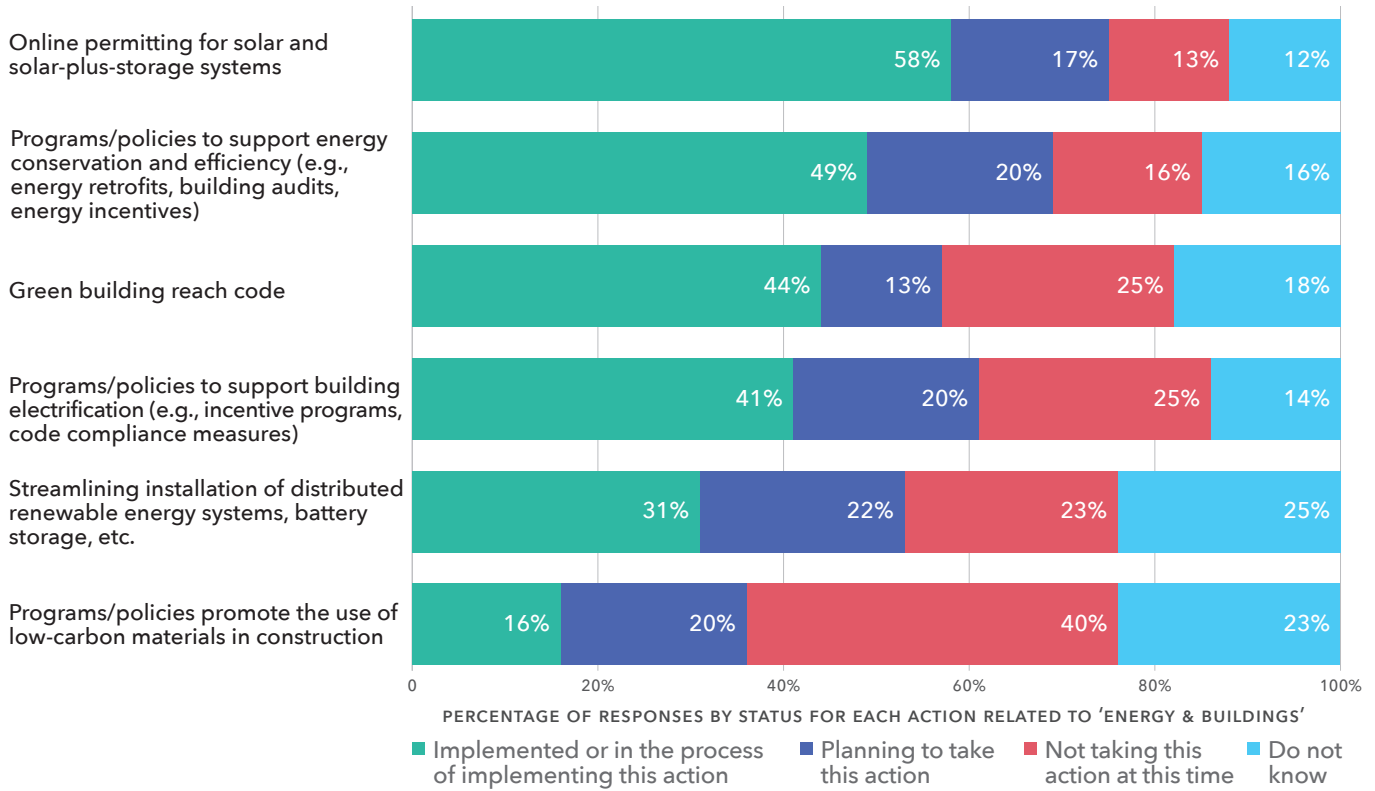


Chart 29 Percentage of respondents that have implemented each Energy & Buildings action by CCA status

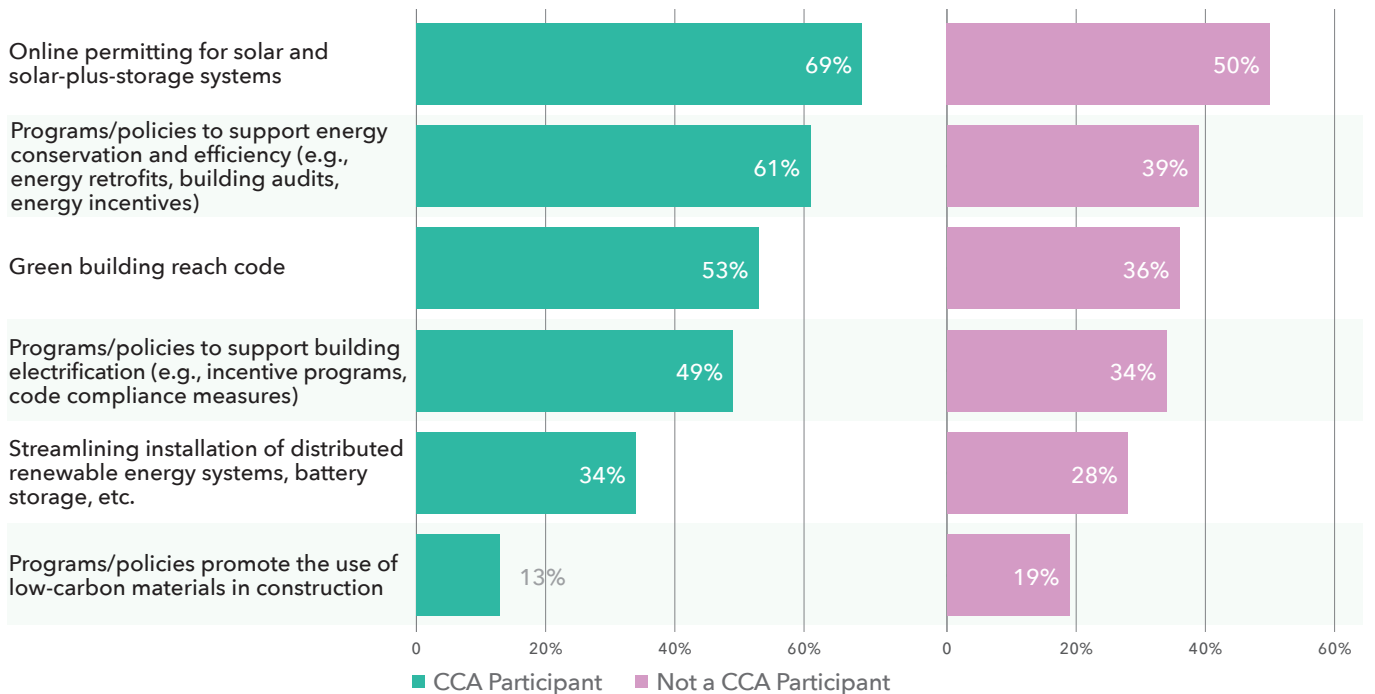


Table 7 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Energy & Buildings action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Energy & Buildings Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Online permitting for solar and solar-plus-storage systems	50%	62%	35%	50%	8%	8%	12%
Programs/policies to support energy conservation and efficiency (e.g., energy retrofits, building audits, energy incentives)	60%	73%	50%	33%	23%	40%	27%
Green building reach code	45%	80%	50%	45%	20%	15%	50%
Programs/policies to support building electrification (e.g., incentive programs, code compliance measures)	58%	71%	35%	45%	23%	39%	45%
Streamlining installation of distributed renewable energy systems, battery storage, etc.	52%	73%	61%	70%	21%	18%	24%
Programs/policies promote the use of low-carbon materials in construction	42%	74%	45%	58%	19%	26%	35%

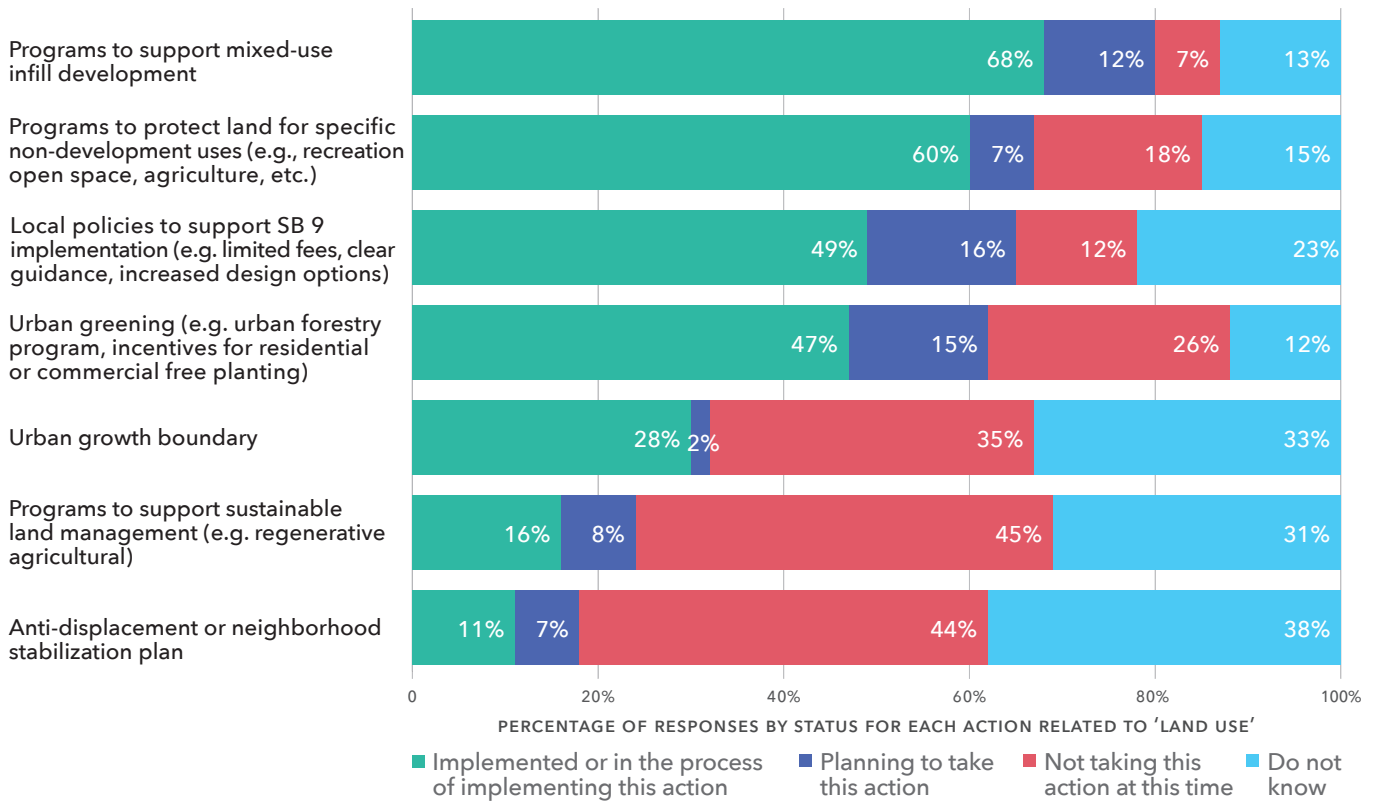
Land Use

Question 18: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Land Use' in your jurisdiction?

Respondents were most likely to implement programs to support mixed-use infill development and programs to protect land for specific non-development uses, like recreation, open space, and agriculture. Half of respondents indicated that they had enacted policies to support SB 9 implementation. The least frequently implemented action related to Land Use was the development of an anti-displacement or neighborhood stabilization plan; only 11% of jurisdictions had taken this action, with a large portion (38%) not knowing its status (Chart 30).

When broken down by income group, we find that respondents in the lowest income group are generally more active on measures related to Land Use than respondents in the highest income group, especially for actions related to density. 73% of jurisdictions in the lowest income group implemented programs to support mixed-use infill development (as opposed to 36% of jurisdictions in the highest income group), and 45% have enacted policies to support SB 9 implementation (as opposed to 36% of highest-income jurisdictions). Respondents in the lowest income group (14%) were also more likely to implement an anti-displacement or neighborhood stabilization plan as opposed to jurisdictions in either the middle (10%) or highest (0%) income group (Chart 31).

Chart 30 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Land Use'



In the Land Use sector, 60% of respondents identified “Technical Assistance” as needed for developing local policies to support SB 9 implementation. Also of note, 55% of respondents identified “Community and Stakeholder Partnerships” and “Institutional and Political Will” as needed for developing an anti-displacement or neighborhood stabilization plan, an action with a fairly low percentage (11%) of implementing jurisdictions (Table 8).

Water and Groundwater

Question 19: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Water & Groundwater' in your jurisdiction?

Over half of responding jurisdictions indicated that they had implemented the use of green infrastructure or permeable surfaces for stormwater and groundwater management. Otherwise, implementation rates for actions related to Water & Groundwater ranged between 15 and 40 percent. The least frequently implemented action was the development of guidance on the use of gray or reclaimed water in private buildings (Chart 32).

In the 'Water & Groundwater' sector, resource needs for actions related to gray or reclaimed water in private buildings stood out. Over half of respondents identified that “Institutional or Political Will” was needed to move these actions forward. Respondents also identified “Technical Assistance” as a need to support these actions (Table 9).

Chart 31 Percentage of respondents that have implemented each action by income group

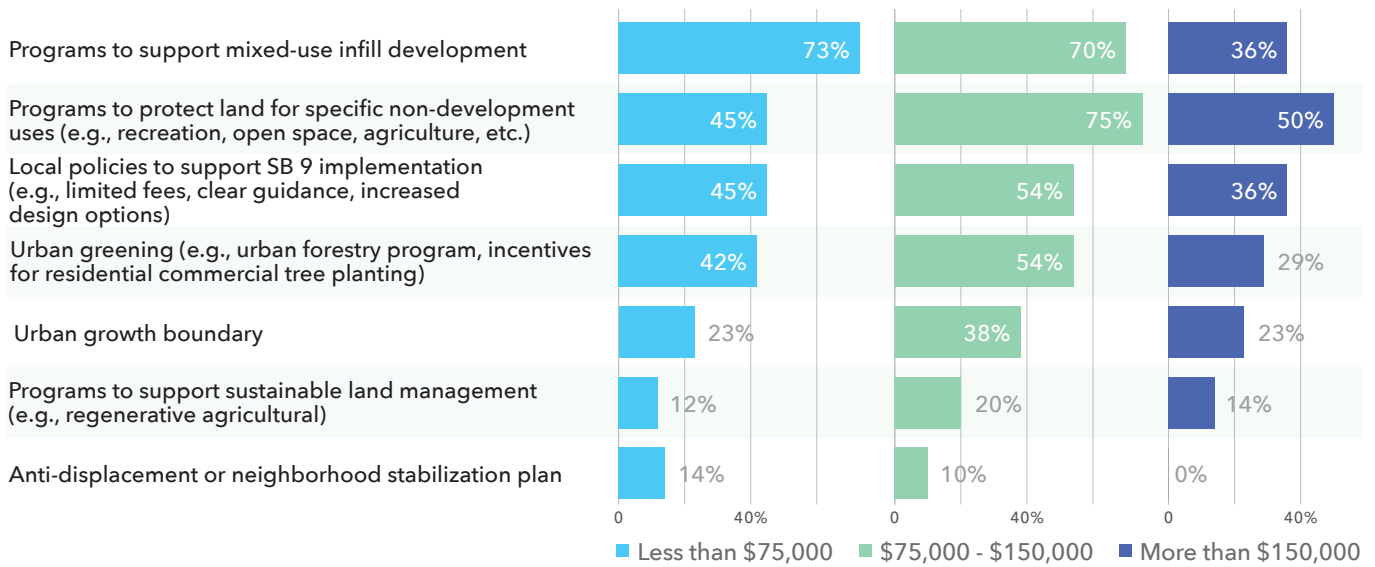


Table 8 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Land Use action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Land Use Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Programs to support mixed-use infill development	44%	56%	28%	28%	28%	22%	50%
Programs to protect land for specific non-development uses (e.g., recreation, open space, agriculture, etc.)	80%	80%	20%	30%	20%	30%	30%
Local policies to support SB 9 implementation (e.g., limited fees, clear guidance, increased design options)	44%	72%	52%	60%	8%	8%	28%
Urban greening (e.g., urban forestry program, incentives for residential or commercial tree planting)	83%	74%	22%	30%	13%	26%	17%
Urban growth boundary	67%	67%	0%	0%	0%	0%	33%
Programs to support sustainable land management (e.g., regenerative agricultural)	83%	67%	25%	50%	17%	33%	17%
Anti-displacement or neighborhood stabilization plan	91%	82%	27%	45%	36%	55%	55%

Chart 32 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to ‘Water and Groundwater’

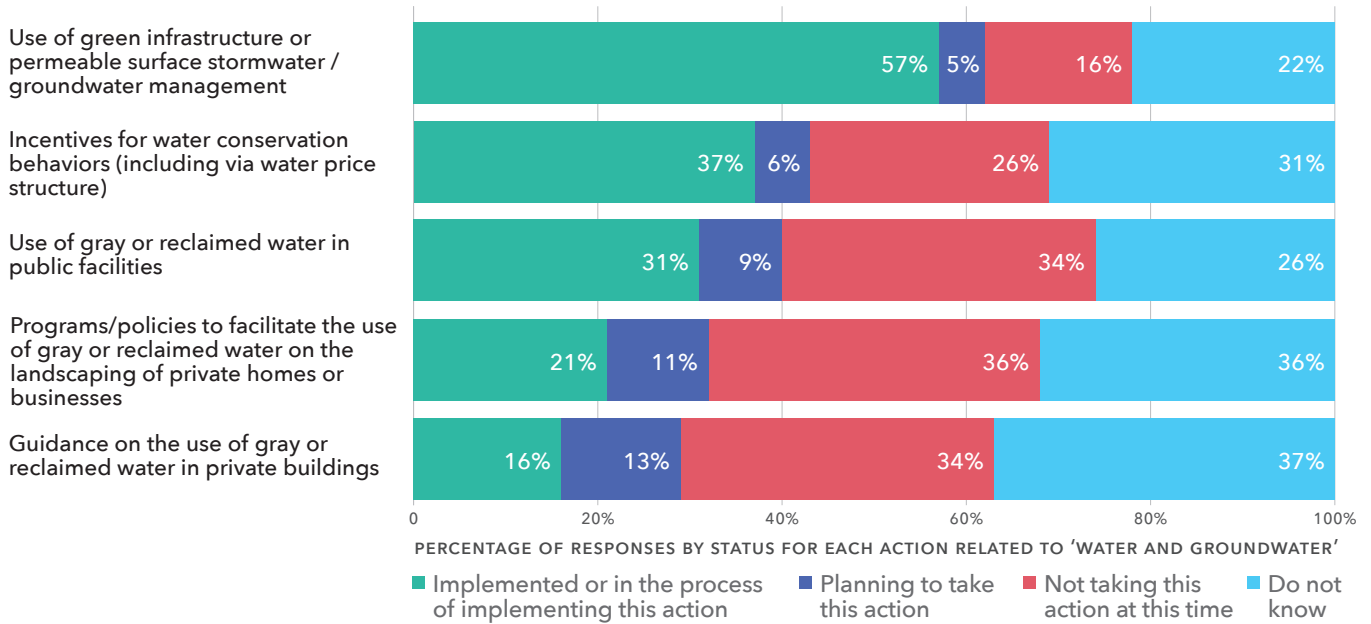
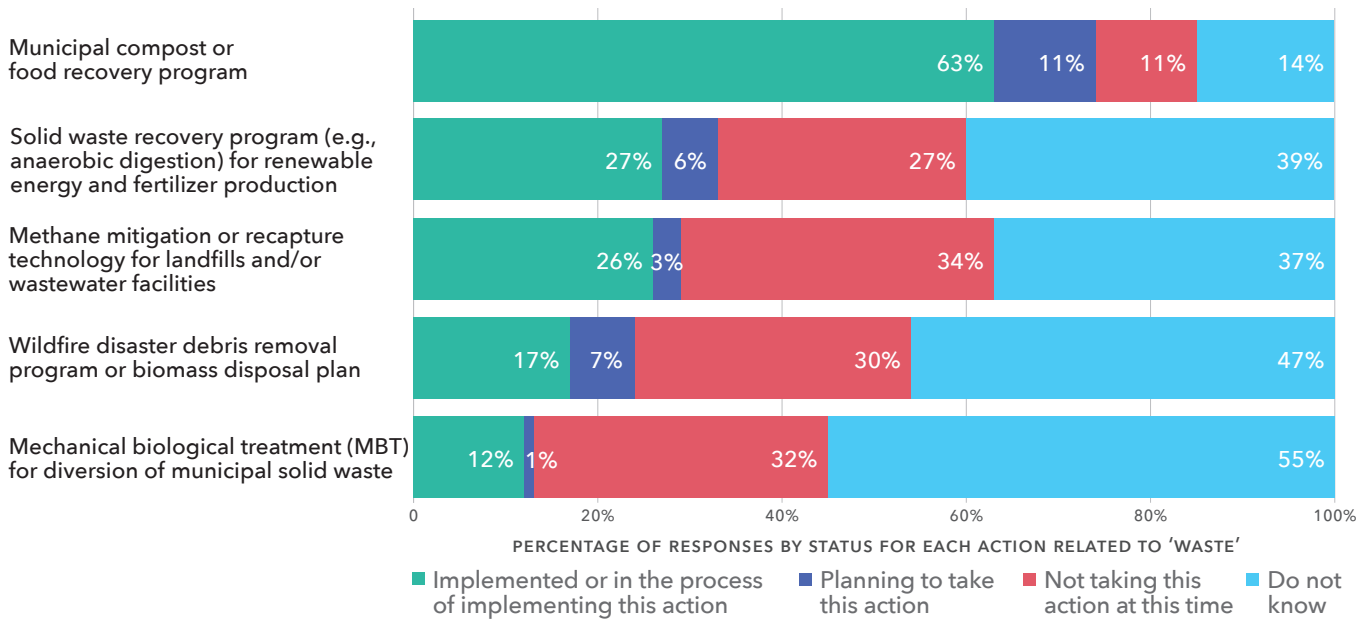


Table 9 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Water & Groundwater action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Water & Groundwater Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Use of green infrastructure or permeable surface for stormwater/groundwater management	88%	88%	38%	38%	13%	25%	38%
Incentives for water conservation behaviors (including via water price structure)	78%	44%	22%	33%	22%	11%	22%
Use of gray or reclaimed water in public facilities	69%	62%	23%	38%	8%	15%	31%
Programs/policies to facilitate the use of gray or reclaimed water on the landscaping of private homes or businesses	63%	88%	31%	50%	13%	25%	50%
Guidance on the use of gray or reclaimed water in private buildings	70%	80%	55%	70%	10%	35%	55%

Chart 33 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Waste'



Waste Management

Question 20: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Waste' in your jurisdiction?

Besides the implementation of a municipal compost or food recovery program, few responding jurisdictions indicated that they had implemented actions related to waste. Additionally, the 'Waste' sector actions had some of the highest "Don't Know" response rates of all sectors (Chart 33).

In the Waste sector, 60% of respondents identified "Inter-governmental Partnerships", the least frequently selected resource across most all actions, as a need for supporting the implementation of methane mitigation or recapture technology for landfills and/or wastewater facilities (Table 10). This is likely due to the need for municipalities to coordinate with Special Districts, which frequently operate and have jurisdictional oversight over these facilities.

Table 10 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Waste action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Waste Actions	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Municipal compost or food recovery program	65%	71%	41%	53%	47%	24%	12%
Solid waste recovery program (e.g., anaerobic digestion) for renewable energy and fertilizer production	67%	78%	67%	78%	33%	33%	33%
Methane mitigation or recapture technology for landfills and/or wastewater facilities	60%	60%	40%	60%	60%	20%	40%
Wildfire disaster debris removal program or biomass disposal plan	60%	50%	10%	40%	20%	10%	20%
Mechanical biological treatment (MBT) for diversion of municipal solid waste	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Climate Risk and Preparedness

Question 21: What is the status of each of the following actions related to 'Climate Risk' in your jurisdiction?

Just under half of responding jurisdictions indicated that they are considering future climate risk in planning and infrastructure decisions. Additionally, the results show higher levels of planning activity for wildfire (52%) and flooding (49%) and much lower levels of activity preparing for extreme heat (23%) (Chart 34).

Resource needs were more evenly spread for actions in the Climate Risk category. About the same percentage of respondents selected Funding, Staff Capacity, Staff Expertise, and Technical Assistance as needs for all five actions (Table 11).

Chart 34 Percentage of city and county responses by status for each action related to 'Climate Risk'

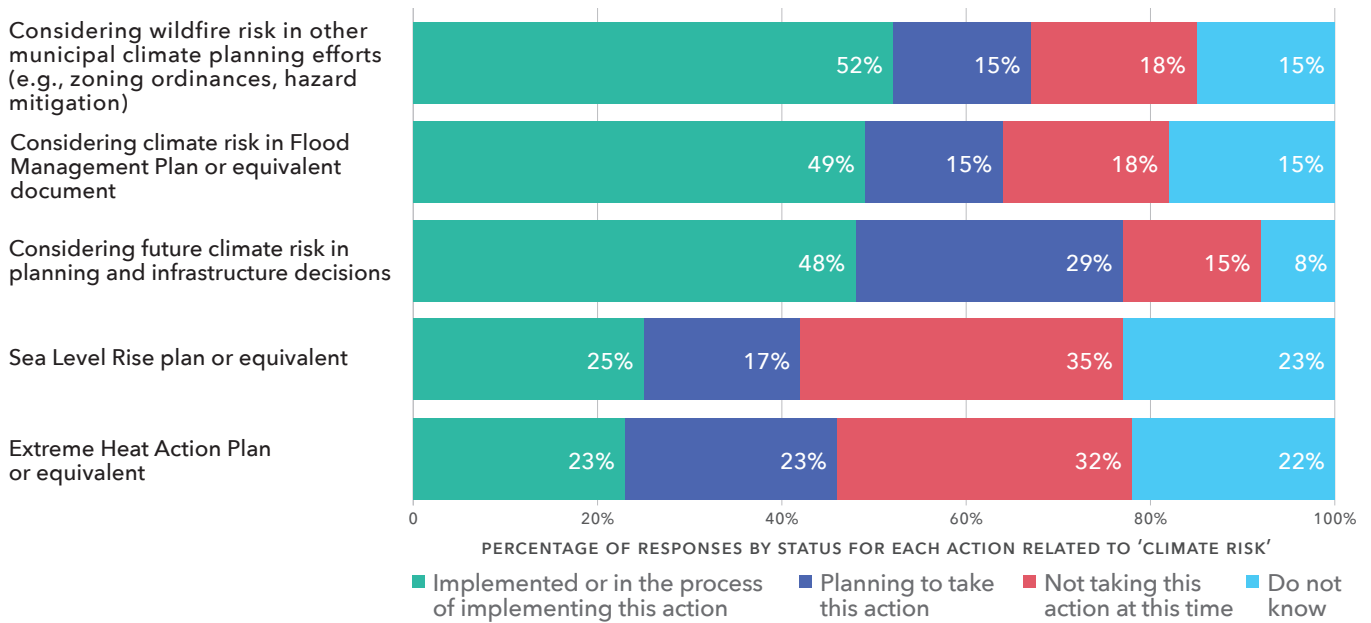


Table 11 Percentage of respondents that identified each resource as a need for moving the Climate Risk action in the corresponding cell from a planning stage to an implementation stage

Climate Risk	Funding	Staff Capacity	Staff Expertise	Technical Assistance	Inter-governmental Partnerships	Community / Stakeholder Partnerships	Institutional / Political Will
Considering wildfire risk in other municipal climate planning efforts (e.g., zoning ordinances, hazard mitigation)	64%	64%	73%	55%	41%	18%	32%
Considering climate risk in Flood Management Plan or equivalent document	70%	70%	61%	61%	39%	26%	22%
Considering future climate risk in planning and infrastructure decisions	64%	77%	66%	64%	36%	20%	34%
Sea Level Rise plan or equivalent	72%	72%	56%	64%	52%	36%	44%
Extreme Heat Action Plan or equivalent	65%	85%	56%	59%	44%	26%	24%



Survey Results: Internal Capacity and Resource Accessibility

Key Takeaways

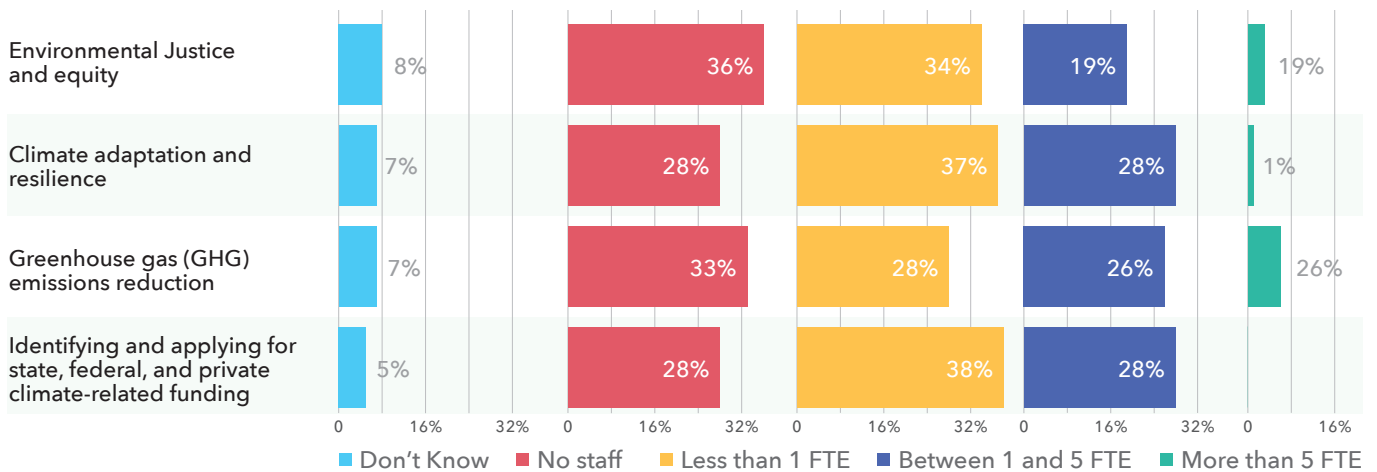
- The majority of responding jurisdictions have fewer than one full-time staff member dedicated to climate planning topics. About a quarter of respondents have between 1 and 5 full-time staff working on climate.
- Respondents identified funding and financial resources as both the hardest to access and the most important for supporting policy implementation.
- Responding jurisdictions’ climate action priorities align with recent federal and state investments, namely through a focus on resiliency, adaptation planning, and infrastructure improvements.

Staff Capacity

Question 22: What level of staffing (full-time equivalent (FTE)) does your jurisdiction currently have to address the following?

Most respondents indicated that they have fewer than five full-time equivalent staff or no staff working on each climate planning topic. Only 6% of responding jurisdictions have more than 5 staff working on GHG emissions reductions (Chart 35).

Chart 35 Distribution of responses for each planning topic by staff capacity



Accessing External Resources

Question 23: We are interested in understanding what resources your jurisdiction has accessed or been provided with to support climate action efforts and what resources would best support your current priorities.

(A): How easy has it been for your jurisdiction to access the following resources to support climate planning efforts?

Responding jurisdictions indicated that resources in the Technical Assistance and Knowledge category were the easiest to access (Chart 36), while resources in the Financial and Funding category were the most difficult. Looking at the accessibility of specific resources within these categories, we see that about half of respondents indicated that accessing information on climate legislation, assistance with climate planning activities, and facilitated partnerships are 'somewhat easy.' 65% of respondents noted that accessing dedicated climate staff is 'not easy.' Notably, 72% of respondents selected the "Don't know/NA" option for Loans, indicating that jurisdictions are not well aware of loans as a source of funding (Chart 37).

(B): What three resources would best support the implementation of your jurisdiction's current climate action priorities?

Half of the survey respondents selected state and federal grants as one of the three resources that would best support climate action implementation. Other frequently selected resources include dedicated climate staff (42% of jurisdictions), assistance with identifying, applying for, and implementing available funds (42% of jurisdictions), and assistance with climate planning activities (28% of jurisdictions) (Chart 38).

Chart 36 Distribution of responses for each resource category

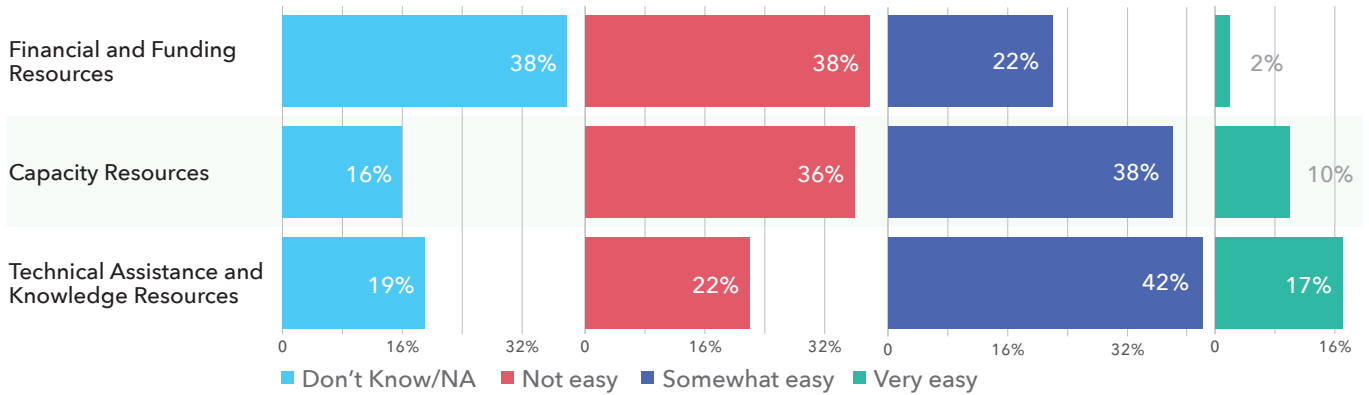


Chart 37 Distribution of responses for each resource

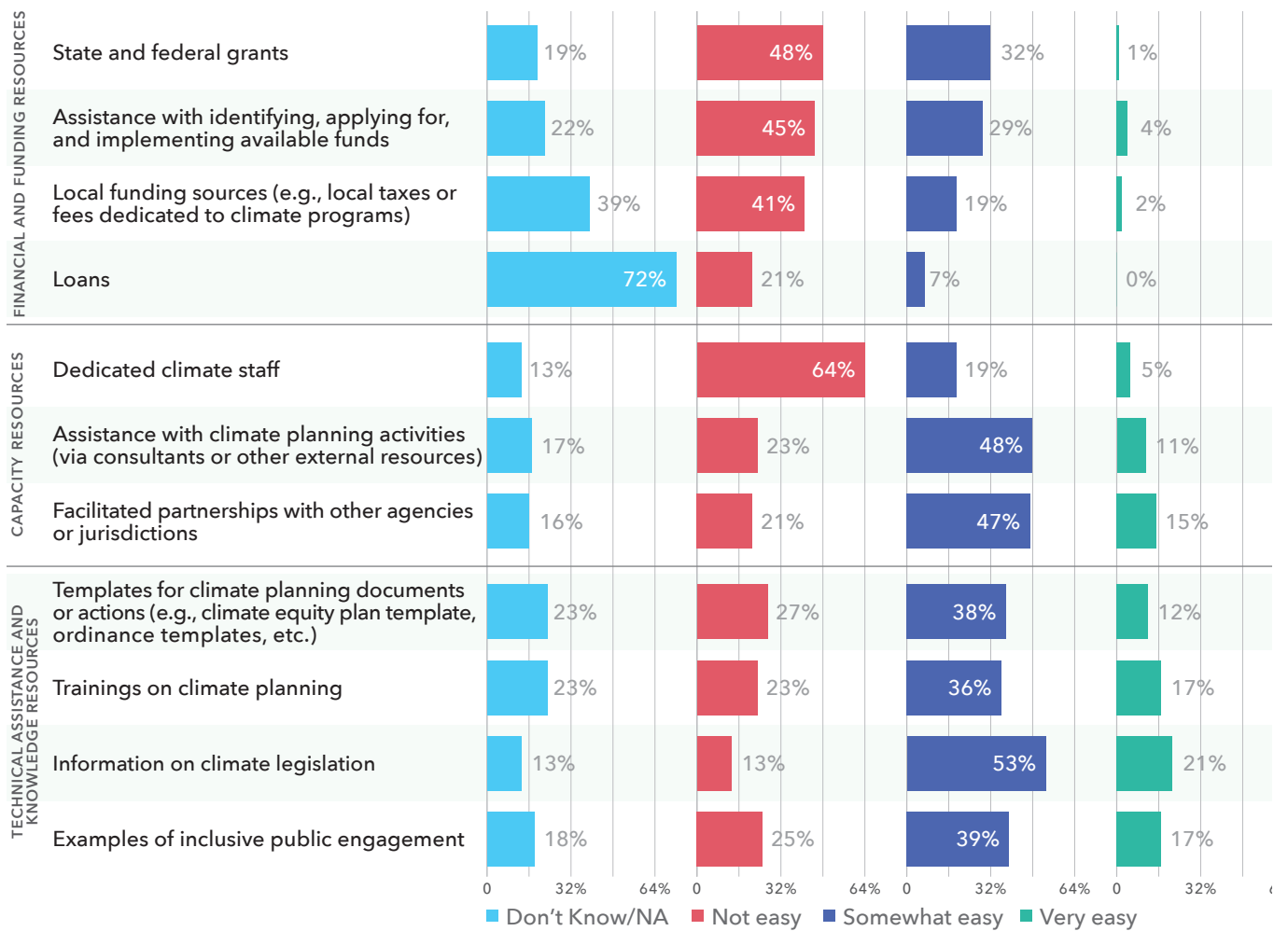
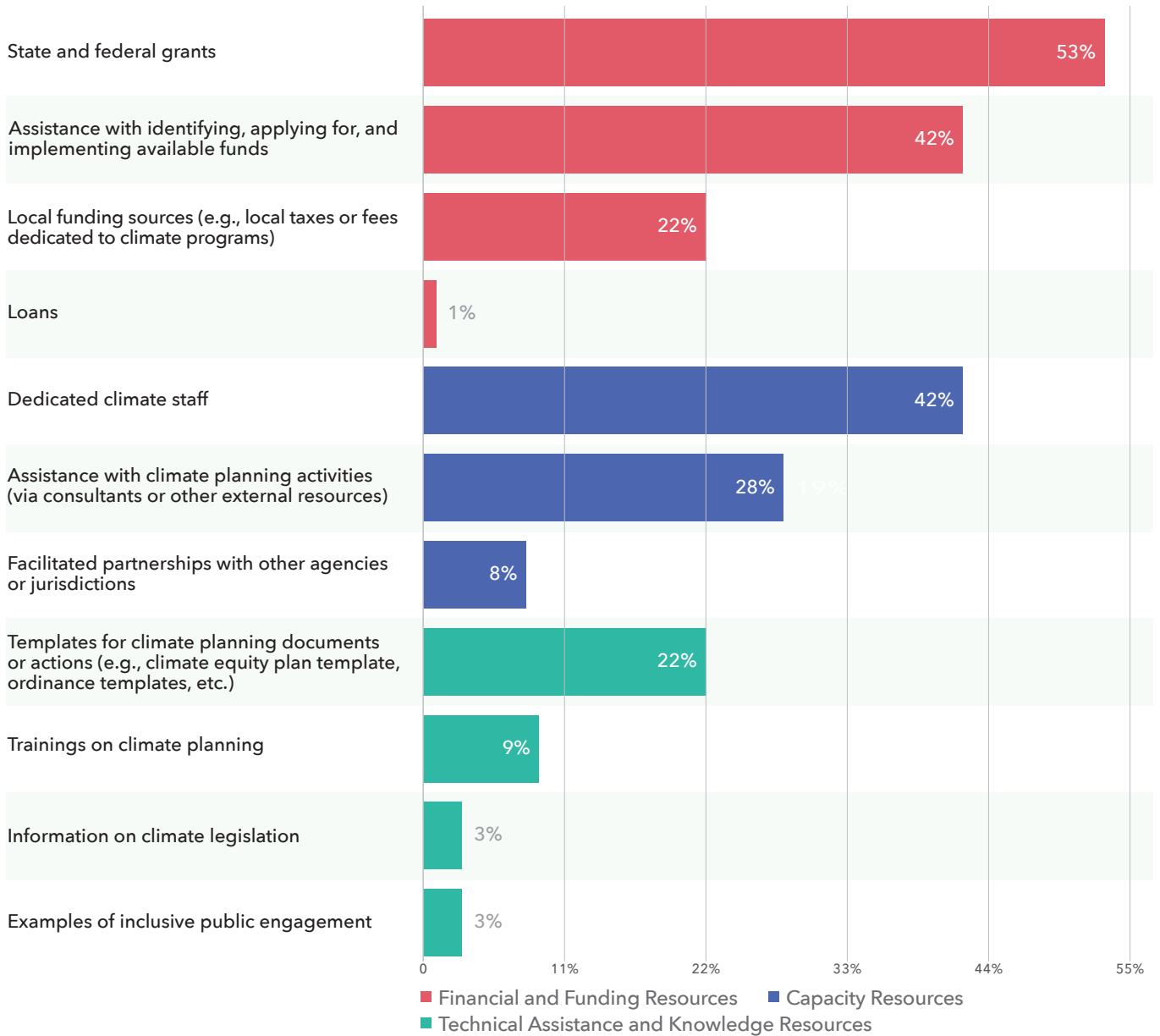


Chart 38 Percentage of jurisdictions that selected each resource as a top need





Survey Results: Climate Action Priorities

Question 24: If your jurisdiction had sufficient resources (staffing, funding, etc.), what are the top three climate actions you would tackle?

The final question of the survey asked respondents to identify their top three priority climate actions if they had sufficient staffing and resources. One hundred and thirty-six respondents submitted at least one priority in response to the question, with most submitting two or three. In total, we collected 390 priorities from respondents. We used a system of codes to identify patterns and trends in the information submitted. Priorities were tagged with multiple codes in order to capture the different stages (e.g., ‘planning’ vs. ‘implementation’) or co-benefits of actions. Here we provide a summary of patterns we observed in the priority responses and the local climate issues that these priorities can potentially help address.

The largest share of priority actions fell into three broad categories: sector-specific actions (e.g., transportation); planning activities, including climate action plans; and adaptation and resilience strategies. Sector-specific actions were most common (almost 70% of respondents). These sector-specific actions ranged from planning activities to locating and applying for funding to active implementation.

The most frequently referenced sectors were Transportation and Energy & Buildings, two key focus areas of recent state and federal climate investments. Climate actions in these sectors also frequently provide co-benefits to communities, suggesting that a priority for cities and counties

is designing and implementing programs that address multiple areas of concern, such as public health and GHG emissions. For example, multiple Transportation-related priorities submitted as responses to this question related to the expansion of biking and pedestrian infrastructure, an action with clear climate and public health benefits.

Jurisdictions also identified planning activities as a priority; about 40% of jurisdictions submitted a priority action that involved some degree of plan development or implementation. The most common planning priority was a Climate Action Plan (CAP). However, respondents identified a range of priorities related to other planning documents, such as Hazard Plans, Risk Mitigation Plans, Climate Equity Plans, and Planning, Zoning, and Building Codes more broadly. This could suggest that while jurisdictions don’t see CAPs as necessary for climate action, planning is still a key first step in helping municipalities align internal priorities, identify key climate vulnerabilities, and advocate for strategic long-term funding.

Finally, respondents identified actions related to adaptation and resilience as priorities for their jurisdictions. Within these priorities, the most common actions included infrastructure, sea level rise, and extreme heat. There was significant overlap between priorities coded as adaptation and resilience strategies and those coded as planning activities, suggesting that respondents are increasingly focused on better incorporating climate risk into existing planning documents, a finding consistent with responses to other survey questions.

High-Level Takeaways and Policy Implications



The survey results provide a snapshot of the status of ongoing and planned climate actions for the responding jurisdictions. The results from this survey highlight some common patterns across jurisdictions that responded to the survey and can be helpful in guiding policy. We supplemented the survey responses with a series of follow-up interviews conducted with select jurisdictions. The interviews provide context for some of the patterns we see in responses and allow us to incorporate additional detail on jurisdictions' decision-making processes. Some important patterns emerged in the survey and interview data.

Climate Action Plans Are Important, but Not Necessary, for Action

Climate Action Plans are often considered the foundation for local climate action. The CARB Scoping Plan and several other state planning guides encourage cities and counties to develop a climate action plan. Two-thirds of survey respondents either have an adopted Climate Action Plan or are in the process of developing one. Climate Action Plans were also a common priority of responding jurisdictions; 20% of respondents listed the development, implementation, or update of their CAP as a top three priority given sufficient staff time and funding.

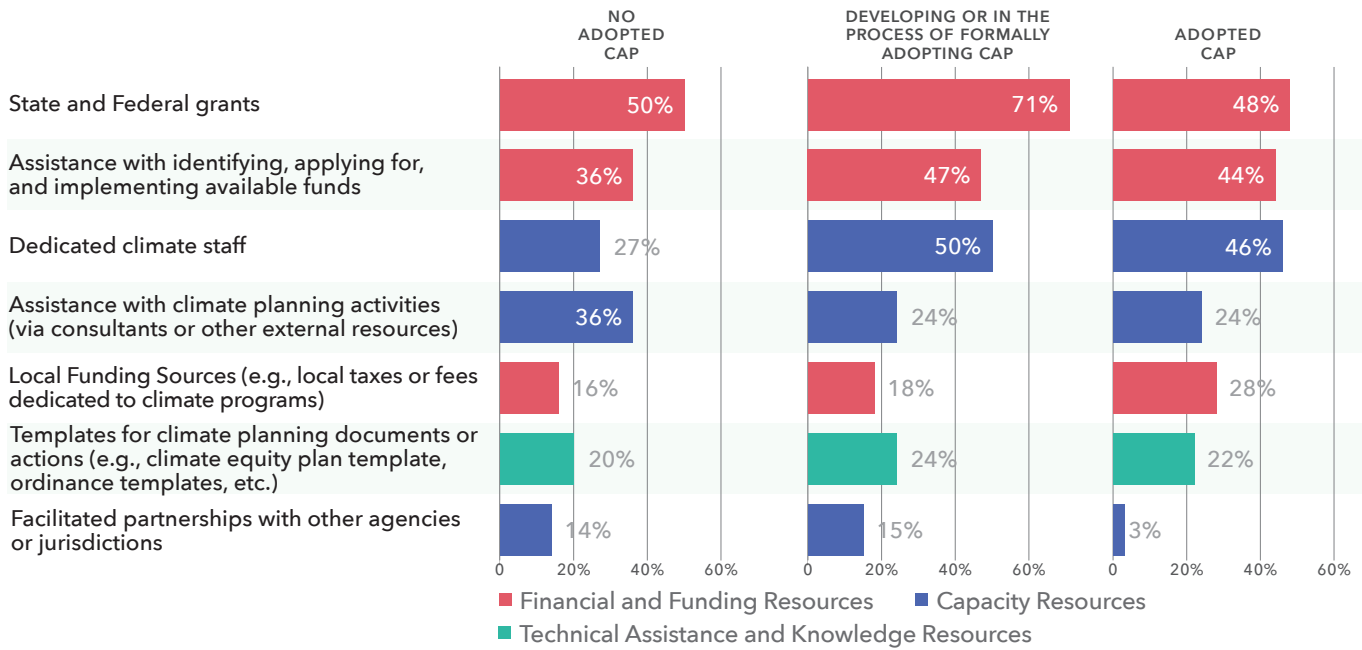
However, regardless of CAP status, survey findings show that climate mitigation and adaptation strategies are common across a wide variety of planning documents, particularly in General Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, and Codes and Ordinances.

Our survey found that jurisdictions that have not adopted nor plan to adopt Climate Action Plans are still frequently active on climate topics. Many of the jurisdictions that indicated they did not have a CAP nor were planning to develop one were integrating climate into other planning documents - notably the General Plan, Codes and Ordinances, and, in the case of adaptation, the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Jurisdictions without a climate action plan were also implementing climate actions in several sectors. However, actions related to Climate Risk, Waste Management, and Water & Groundwater were notably lower among respondents without a CAP (implementation was approximately 30 percentage points lower in respondents without a CAP).

Most CAPs do not include funding strategies, resulting in documents that, on top of being expensive to develop, can be even more so to implement.¹⁷ Survey results reinforce this; almost half of responding jurisdictions with adopted CAPs still flagged 'State and Federal Grants' and 'Assistance identifying, applying for, and implementing available funds' as top needs for making progress on policy implementation (Chart 39). In follow-up interviews, staff from a small jurisdiction currently updating their CAP noted that a priority is the development of an implementable document, which is why their updated plan will only include climate strategies backed by associated and known funding mechanisms.

¹⁷ Bedsworth, Louise, Ted Lamm, Katie Segal, and Ross Zelen. Funding San Francisco Climate Action. CLEE, November 2022.

Chart 39 Percentage of respondents that selected each resource as a top need by CAP status



Organization and Integration of Climate Activities Remain a Challenge

Jurisdictions that participated in interviews were asked how responsibilities related to climate were divided among staff and, if their jurisdiction had a standalone climate program, how they coordinated with other departments. Respondents with a dedicated climate program, or at least one dedicated climate staff, noted that a frequent challenge is the design and placement of staff position(s) focused on climate. Staff from two different counties, one large and one small, flagged that the decision not to place their position in the County Administrator’s office has made it more challenging for them to operate with authority. On the other hand, staff from a larger but inland city noted that their position in the Mayor’s Office has enabled them to maintain a holistic, high-level view of how climate policy can be integrated across department programs and plans.

While a standalone division might promote climate issues to a more visible seat within local government, it can also reinforce the siloing of climate work and limit staff’s ability to make climate action a priority for other departments. Staff noted that a challenge to the integration of climate across departments is the common misconception within local governments that climate policy is the sole responsibility of climate staff. This can be particularly limiting for smaller and lower-capacity jurisdictions that would benefit the most from cross-departmental coordination on planning, policy development, and funding acquisition. For example, jurisdictions with limited staff capacity to apply for climate-related funding noted that they have had trouble encouraging other departments, like Public Works or Transportation, to go after grants that would support vehicle and building electrification. Without a dedicated intragovernmental task force or working group with representatives from different departments, climate tasks with relevance for different policy areas and sectors continue to be seen as the responsibility of a single climate or sustainability staff member.

Co-Benefits are Important, Especially in Smaller and More Conservative Jurisdictions

Within our sample, jurisdictions without CAPs were more likely to be smaller, conservative-leaning, and have a median household income below the state average. While smaller respondents were consistently less active in implementing climate actions across all topics, jurisdictions in the lowest-income group were more active than jurisdictions in the highest-income group on actions related to Land Use. Many of the actions where we see this pattern continue are related to density, urban greening, and reducing sprawl. Conservative-leaning jurisdictions were also more likely to have implemented actions related to density and sprawl reduction, as well as actions related to land protection and management.

Actions that conservative-leaning and less wealthy jurisdictions were more likely to implement can frequently support climate goals while achieving other co-benefits for residents. During follow-up interviews, staff from smaller and more conservative jurisdictions flagged that although they may not advertise their policy actions as having climate impacts, they frequently do address GHG emissions or incorporate adaptation and resilience outcomes into sector-specific actions and broader planning initiatives. For example, staff from a small agricultural jurisdiction talked about efforts to increase access to fresh produce for lower-income residents, noting how the program also incentivizes waste reduction, despite that not being its primary goal.

Interviewees noted that framing is important in garnering public support for local climate action in jurisdictions where populations might be more hesitant to accept climate change; multiple interviewees said that they frame climate programs as community health or quality-of-life programs. These same jurisdictions noted that internal support, particularly from elected officials, is still necessary but that public health framings can assist with efforts to make climate policy a priority.

State Action and Investment Strongly Guide Local Action

We found that within our sample, jurisdictions are most active in the Transportation, Energy & Buildings, and Land Use sectors. At an individual action level, the percentage of jurisdictions having implemented each action is variable but generally indicates that state action—through funding or statutory requirements—is a strong motivator for local policy implementation. Jurisdictions were most likely to have implemented actions either required by state law or supported by state guidance and regulations. During follow-up interviews, staff confirmed that meeting legal requirements related to climate is a budgetary priority but noted that the increase in state mandates for local agencies sometimes feels unmanageable, particularly for jurisdictions with limited staff capacity.

The survey findings show that respondents are implementing actions across all seven topics included in the survey. Land use, transportation, and energy and building actions have the highest rate of implementation (92%, 88%, and 87% of respondents have implemented at least one action in each category, respectively). In contrast, only 54% of respondents have implemented at least one action related to Climate Equity and Environmental Justice. For the latter, actions were more likely to be in the planning stage. Chart 40 shows the percentage of responding jurisdictions that are planning to take at least one action for each topic. Notably, 60% of jurisdictions plan to take action related to Climate Equity and EJ, making it the second-highest category after Trans-

portation. This could suggest that a larger portion of municipalities intend to prioritize these policy areas and that we might expect to see higher implementation rates for actions in these categories in the coming years.

A local focus on transportation, energy, and equity aligns with state and federal priorities and funding commitments. The California Climate Commitment¹⁸ directs funds toward supporting the transition to zero-emission vehicles and provides for major investments in public transportation infrastructure. Federal funding targets a number of related climate issues, including GHG reductions, buildings and infrastructure, transportation, and resilience. While the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) directs the majority of its funds towards transportation and associated infrastructure, the Inflation Reduction Act's biggest beneficiary will be the energy sector.¹⁹ For instance, the IRA provides for access to federal clean energy tax credits for municipally owned utilities and competitive financing through a new federal Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. It also incentivizes a shift toward increased economic inclusion and workforce development, particularly in the energy sector. Several provisions are cross-cutting in this way, enabling jurisdictions to address multiple needs, like affordable housing and energy efficiency, through a single program.

A large portion of jurisdictions that participated in interviews identified elected official support as a main driver behind their success on climate action; this was true for both small and large jurisdictions. Support from City Council members, County supervisors, and the mayor's team frequently resulted in the creation of staff positions focused on climate and the dedication of general funds to climate programs. When respondents identified Institutional/Political Will as a barrier to progress, they were more frequently referring to institutional structures or pushback from department heads.

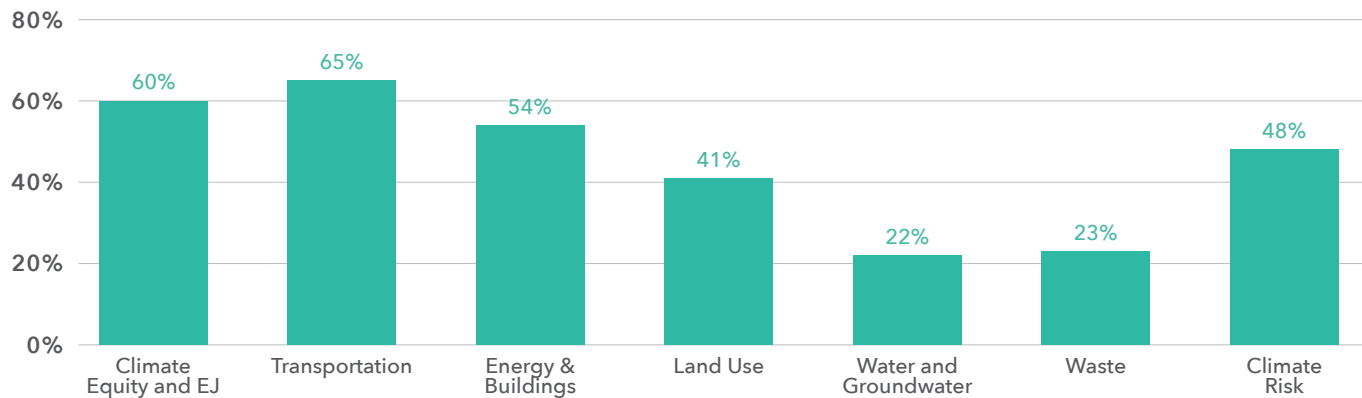
Increased Support is Needed for Equity and Resilience Actions

Climate Equity and Climate Risk both had slightly lower levels of implementation than other sectors (74% and 54%, respectively), but both had fairly high amounts of actions in the planning stage (Chart 40, 60% and 48%, respectively). Both topics have taken on increased urgency and focus in recent years.

California has been prioritizing equity in its climate actions and investments since the passage of SB 535 (De Leon) in 2012 and AB 1550 (Gomez) in 2012, which required a certain percentage of the State's climate investments be made in or benefit disadvantaged communities. Today, numerous state programs direct regional and local entities to consider EJ in decision-making processes and direct funding toward projects supporting EJ communities. The Biden Administration's Justice40 initiative is a more recent priority for federal programs. Justice40 requires that a policy that requires at least 40% of federal investments in certain programs be directed toward historically

18 The California Climate Commitment refers to the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 budgets that together direct over \$54 billion in funding over the next five years into programs that address climate mitigation and adaptation. The Commitment is a comprehensive state plan for how to protect California's residents from the impacts of climate change, reduce pollution and transition energy dependence away from the biggest polluters, and save Californian's money while supporting the development of more prosperous communities.

19 Tomer, A., George, C., & Kane, J. W. (2023, February 1). *The start of America's infrastructure decade: How macroeconomic factors may shape local strategies*. Retrieved June 11, 2023, from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-start-of-americas-infrastructure-decade-how-macroeconomic-factors-may-shape-local-strategies/>

Chart 40 Percentage of respondents that are planning to take at least one action by topic

disadvantaged and overburdened communities. Local governments play an essential role in ensuring that policy implementation results in equitable outcomes for communities that are at the highest risk of experiencing impacts from climate change.²⁰

Given survey findings regarding local action related to equity, we expect that California's municipalities will need to continue building out capacity to be well-positioned to receive and support the distribution of these funds. Jurisdictions can do so by fostering relationships with community organizations and providing capacity and technical support to potential grant applicants. Our survey responses show that over half of responding cities and counties have taken the necessary first step to identify priority communities within their jurisdictions; however, only 13% of respondents use federal tools, like the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). Local governments should ensure that the communities they define as 'priority' also qualify as beneficiaries under the Justice40 Initiative to maximize equitable outcomes. At the same time, follow-up interviews with small jurisdictions highlighted the importance of local data in municipalities' decision-making. Staff from a small city in Northern California noted that CalEnviroScreen and related tools do not provide granular enough data on communities for them to capture and plan accordingly for the nuances within their jurisdiction.

Respondents also identified several actions related to climate risk in the planning stage. This level of planning corresponds with state requirements that cities and counties integrate climate risk into their General Plan.²¹ This increase in activity likely also relates to the increased frequency of climate-related extreme events California has experienced in recent years.^{22,23} A recent poll conducted by the Public Policy Institute of California showed high public awareness and concern about climate-related extreme weather.²⁴

20 Donoghoe, M., Perry, A. M., & Stephens, H. (2023, June 1). *The US can't achieve environmental justice through one-size-fits-all climate policy*. Retrieved June 20, 2023, from <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-us-cant-achieve-environmental-justice-through-one-size-fits-all-climate-policy/>

21 SB 379, Jackson. Land use: general plan: safety element. GC § 65302.

22 Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. 2022. Indicators of Climate Change in California: Fourth Edition. November.

23 Bedsworth, L., D. Cayan, G. Franco, L. Fisher, and S. Ziaja. 2018. Statewide Summary Report. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. Publication number: SUMCCCA4-2018-013.

24 Baldassare, M; D. Bonner, R. Lawler, and D. Thomas. 2023. PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and the Environment. July.

Methane is an Opportunity for Increased Local Impact

A notable finding from the survey is that 68% of responding jurisdictions with emission inventories have included methane in their inventory. However, responding jurisdictions are less active in the waste sector, where the majority of local methane emissions originate from, as opposed to other sectors covered in the survey. To support the State's Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy, local governments can help divert organic materials from the waste stream, collaborate with local agencies to implement strategies for on-site energy production, and employ their land use and permitting authority to overcome barriers associated with siting recycling facilities.²⁵ Between 10 and 25% of survey respondents are already exploring some of these options, and another 5-10% are planning to do so.

Funding and Capacity Needed to Overcome Barriers to Action, but Need to be Tailored

A wide variety of resources exist to support local governments in their efforts to plan for and implement climate solutions. However, survey findings suggest that while the federal and state focus on providing funding aligns with local needs, these resources continue to be challenging for jurisdictions to access and fall short when not paired with long-term solutions for continued funding and increased staff capacity.

Survey results on the most-needed resources to support climate action are aligned with the existing understanding of local government needs. Funding and staff capacity were the two most important resources identified by respondents looking to move climate action from the *planning* to the *implementation* stage.

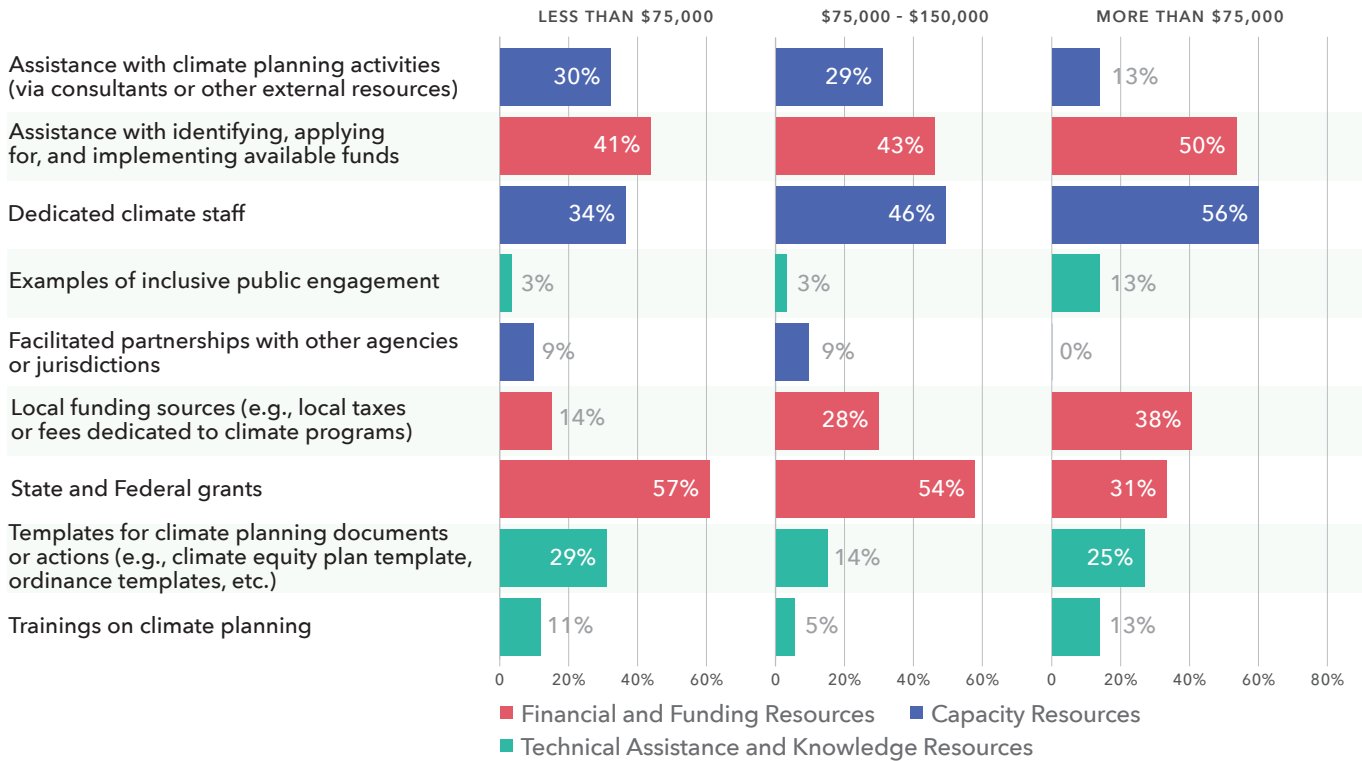
However, resource needs are not consistent across all jurisdictions, especially those in the highest income category. Jurisdictions in the middle- and lowest-income groups are fairly well aligned on priority needs (Chart 41). Responding jurisdictions in the highest-income group (those with a median household income over \$150,000) were far less likely to select state and federal grants as a top priority (selected by only 31% of respondents) compared to jurisdictions in the middle- and lowest-income groups (selected by 54% and 57% of jurisdictions, respectively). These wealthier jurisdictions were more likely to select local funding sources (38% of jurisdictions).

We also found a difference in capacity needs between these two income groups. Low- and middle-income jurisdictions were more likely to identify assistance with climate planning activities and facilitate partnerships as priority needs, while jurisdictions over the \$150,000 cutoff overwhelmingly selected dedicated climate staff as the primary Capacity need.

There are several other differences between higher-income jurisdictions and lower-income jurisdictions (including in the Knowledge resource category) that, overall, highlight the need for more targeted resources that address municipalities' unique challenges. This theme was present during interviews as well; small jurisdictions noted that state and federal funding sources that require them to compete with larger municipalities are often a time and energy sink. Staff expressed frustration at the funding cycles that reward large jurisdictions for having more built-out climate programs with resources that will continue to make those jurisdictions competitive for future grants. Small municipalities, in particular

25 California Air Resources Board (2017, March 1). *Final Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy*. Retrieved June 20, 2023, from <https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/resources/documents/slcp-strategy-final>

Chart 41 Percentage of respondents that selected each resource as a top need by income group



those with no or few dedicated climate staff, advocated for more non-competitive funding and grant applications with reduced barriers to completion. Respondents from smaller jurisdictions with a high proportion of disadvantaged communities also discussed frustration with regional collaboration requirements in funding programs, which can result in smaller jurisdictions being used to meet population criteria for applications but not receiving relevant benefits from the project.

Service Programs are Helpful for Adding Capacity

Interviews also revealed that state and federal service programs are playing a large role in building capacity for resource-limited jurisdictions. At least four jurisdictions that participated in follow-up interviews noted that a Civic Spark or AmeriCorps Fellow supports their climate action work. Staff was quick to emphasize that fellows have been pivotal in their jurisdictions’ ability to be proactive on climate issues. This presents a big opportunity as California has established the California Climate Action Corps, the first state-level climate service corps. Scaling and learning replicable lessons from these programs will be critical for designing capacity-building programs to support local climate action.

Collaboratives Can be Helpful but Need to be Designed to Benefit All Partners

Survey findings do not indicate that responding jurisdictions uniformly view intergovernmental partnerships as a priority for improving climate outcomes. However, as federal funding streams find their way to state government agencies, it will be necessary for municipalities to proactively collaborate with state actors to ensure the efficient rollout of funds.²⁶ A number of IRA provisions seek to support regional-scale improvements specifically, so coordination with neighboring jurisdictions will be necessary for municipalities interested in accessing those resources. Several jurisdictions that participated in interviews are involved in either state or regional climate collaboratives and related groups that share resources and lessons learned between members. However, while interviewees noted that collaborations focused on resource-sharing tend to be helpful, some flagged that they have experienced challenges with regional-scale collaborations. This was particularly true for smaller jurisdictions whose demographic makeup varies from that of regional partners; in such instances, priorities can become unaligned, resulting in the inequitable distribution of benefits.

²⁶ Mure, E., Weir, M., White, E., & Ballesteros, R. (2023, April 21). *Supporting Local Governments as Climate Change Threatens Their Communities*. Retrieved June 20, 2023, from <https://rmi.org/supporting-local-governments-as-climate-change-threatens-their-communities/>

Conclusion

Over the next decade, cities and counties will benefit from major investments from the California Climate budget, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the Inflation Reduction Act. Realizing the potential of these investments to achieve climate benefits will depend on local government readiness and willingness to advance climate solutions. It will also depend on state, federal, and other partners' ability to design and implement targeted resources for local jurisdictions, meeting the needs of municipalities through sustainable and long-term funding and capacity building.

As with any survey, the results only reflect the activities and perspectives of those who respond. Therefore, additional outreach and a needs assessment are needed to develop a more complete picture of local climate action. Helpful next steps could include listening sessions or workshops designed for municipalities underrepresented in our current sample. Such engagement activities will help to understand the priorities of some of the State's most resource-limited communities and create an opportunity to provide information and technical assistance to participants, ensuring that the process is mutually beneficial.

